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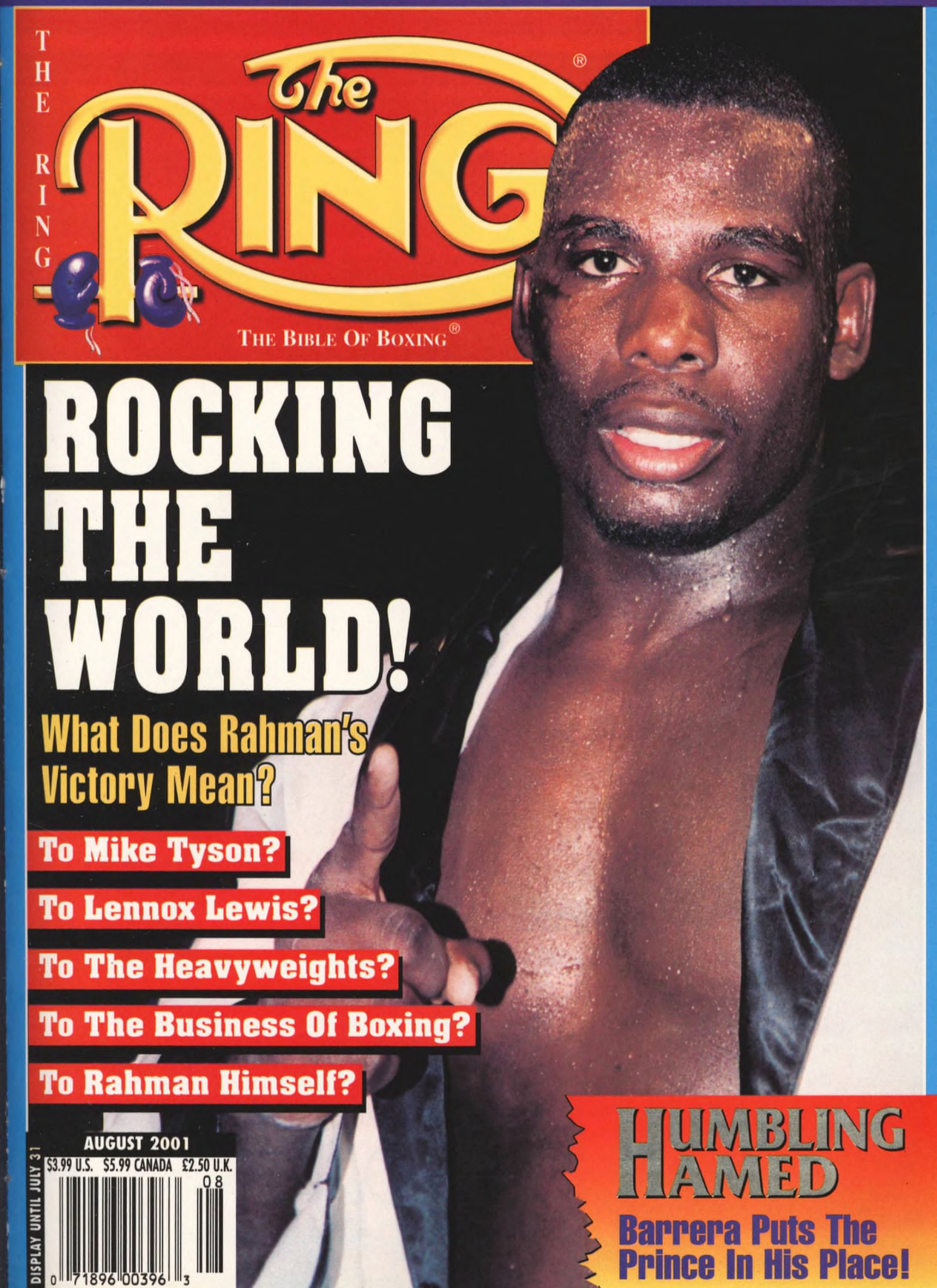

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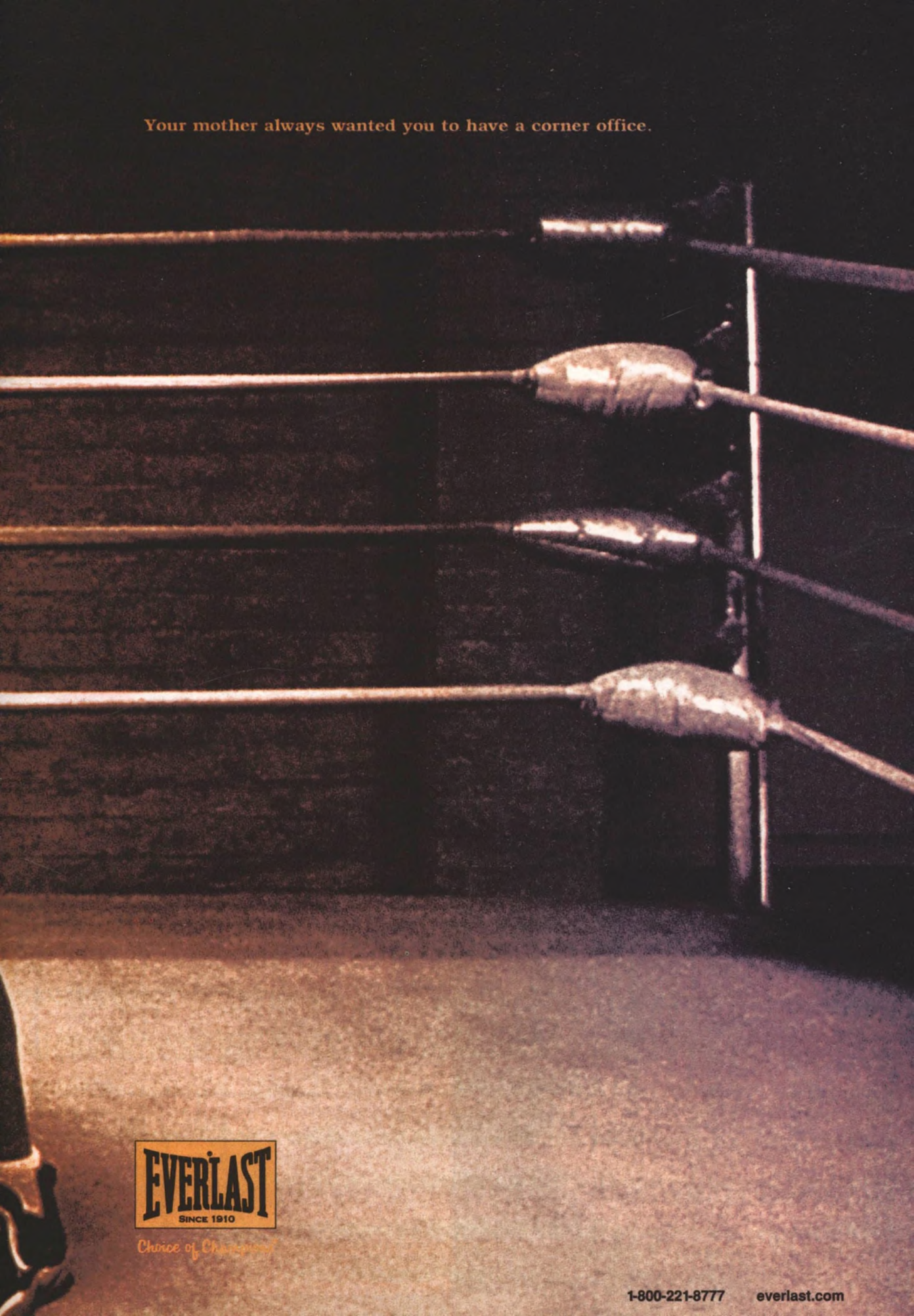
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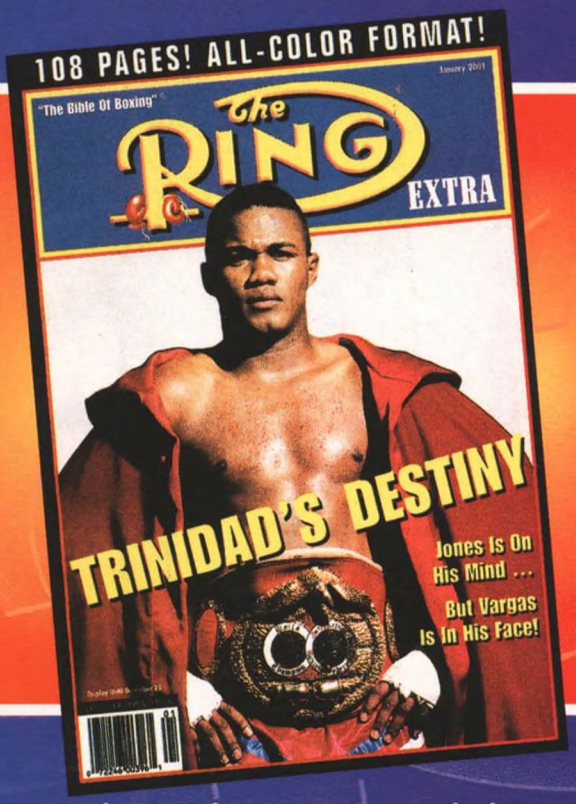

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RINGSIDE

As I sat ringside adding up my scorecard at the conclusion of the Marco Antonio Barrera-Naseem Hamed fight, a frightening thought flashed through my mind and sent a shiver running down my spine: What if they give the decision to Hamed?

No way, I reassured myself. If they did, Barrera's fans would tear the place apart. And who knows? Maybe the possibility of such a reaction influenced the judges to give it to the right guy. I sure don't know, because half of the time I can't figure out how the hell they come up with the scores they do.

Fortunately, there hasn't been a bad decision in a major fight since the first Lennox Lewis-Evander Holyfield travesty, but there have been enough of them in mid-level fights to justify my apprehension.

It was only a week before Barrera-Hamed that a crummy decision allowed defending WBA bantamweight champion Paulie Ayala to hang on to the title against Mexican challenger Hugo Dianzo. It wasn't as bad as some I've seen, but it was bad enough. And although ringside commentator Teddy Atlas could be heard angrily venting as *Friday Night Fights* went off the air, there was no public outcry like the one that turned the first Lennox Lewis-Evander Holyfield verdict into a major scandal. But that doesn't mean that Dianzo was any less a victim, or that the sport wasn't hurt by what happened.

Moreover, it wasn't that long ago that there was a similar decision in the Willie Jorrin-Oscar Larios WBC super bantamweight title fight. Again, it wasn't the worst decision of all-time, just a run-of-the-mill gyp job. But don't tell that to Larios, who fell to his knees in disbelief when the decision in favor of the hometown hero was announced.

From a business point of view, the Sweet Science is on the ropes right now, and every negative eats away at its rapidly shrinking fan base. A lot of folks assume boxing is fixed, and the Ayala-Dianzo and Jorrin-Larios decisions only reinforce their opinion. Even assuming they were cases of incompetence rather than dishonesty, the perception of wrongdoing remains.

Thankfully, justice was done in the Barrera-Hamed fight, but just getting it right every now and then in a big fight isn't enough. In today's climate, boxing has to be close to perfect if it's going to have a fighting chance of regaining the trust and patronage of the mainstream. Every questionable call, even in a relatively minor fight, drives yet another wedge between boxing consumers and the sport, and that's the last thing we need.

***

Lennox Lewis might not have been prepared for Hasim Rahman, but THE RING was. In spite of the fact that the heavyweight title fight took place past our deadline, we made special arrangements with our printer to make sure we could pull back the cover and enough pages for a full-length feature before this issue went to press—just in case.

That's why no other pages besides this, the table of contents, and the feature story on page 40 make any reference to the historic fight. However, the September 2001 edition of THE RING EXTRA will contain my exclusive interview with the new champ conducted just hours after his return to the States.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 80, No. 8 **August 2001**

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ROUND ONE

TRAGIC CHAPTER FOR PAGE

The end of Greg Page's boxing career came on March 9 at an obscure venue in Erlanger, Kentucky, called Peel's Palace, where he fought Dale Crowe for the Kentucky heavyweight title and a purse of $1,500. It was sad enough that the 42-year-old former WBA heavyweight champion had been reduced to fighting for chump change, but when the evening ended with a comatose Page being rushed to the hospital, boxing braced itself for yet another possible tragedy.

As we went to press, Page had just been transfered to a rehabilitation center from a Cincinnati hospital, where surgery had been performed to remove a blood clot from his brain. The fighter's family initially asked hospital officials not to release information about his status, but it was revealed a few weeks later that he had been upgraded from critical to fair condition.

Meanwhile, the same old questions that surface every time a boxer is seriously injured in a fight are being asked. Why did it happen? Could it have been prevented? Who's to blame? As is usually the case in such instances, the answers are ambiguous at best.

We do know, however, that in the 10th round Crowe, 28, hit Page with a clean left to the head, followed by a mild push. Page fell back against the ropes and slumped to a sitting position, with his head and shoulders flopped backward between the ropes. He did not, however, hit his head on the canvas or ring apron, as was reported in some published accounts.

"They were hitting each other pretty good," said Kentucky Athletic Chairman Jack Kerns. "It was a good fight, but Crowe was dominating it."

Page with former pupil Oliver McCall

Terry O'Brien, the promoter of the fight, claimed that it took 15 minutes for the ringside doctor to determine that Page had been seriously hurt.

There was no ambulance on site, as Kentucky law does not mandate one, and the federal Professional Boxing Safety Act only calls for an ambulance *or* medical personnel to be at the location. According to Lt. Todd Schulkers of the Erlanger Fire and EMS, a call was received at 11:10 p.m. and the two-person crew arrived at 11:13. Page was first taken to the nearest hospital and then University Hospital in Cincinnati.

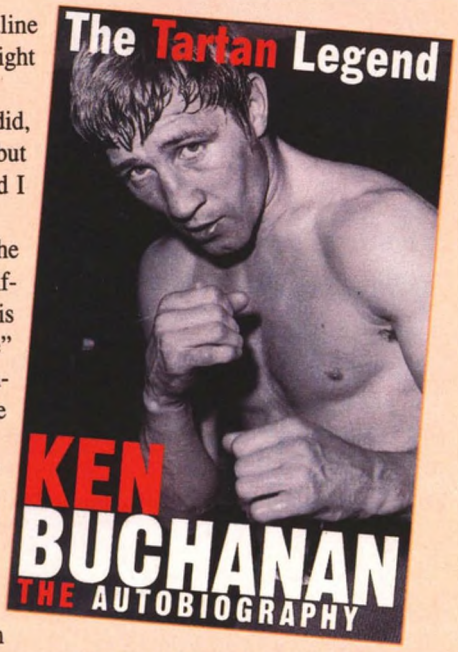
Page, a native of Louisville, Kentucky, turned pro in February 1979, and due to his fleet footwork, rapid-fire jab, and their shared birthplace was often called the "next Muhammad Ali" during the early part of his career. While he never came close to duplicating Ali's accomplishments, Page won the WBA belt in January '84 when he knocked out Gerrie Coetzee in South Africa. The glory was short-lived, however, and Page was outpointed by Tony Tubbs in his first defense, four months later.

Page retired from the ring in '93 after being knocked out by Bruce Seldon. He helped train fighters for most of the next three years, but launched a comeback in May '96. At first, Page won a series of low-budget bouts, but had lost four of his last eight fights going into the Crowe match.

While Page's age and lengthy career could have been contributing factors, most fighters who have suffered acute brain injuries in recent years—Paul Ingle (28), Bobby Tomasello (24), Randie Carver (24), Carlos Barreto (23)—have been significantly younger than Page, whose overall record is 58-17-1 (48). The hard truth is that any punch at any time can cause a brain injury. The best boxing can do is reduce the odds, which in Page's case were undoubtedly stacked against him.

—Nigel Collins

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF



According to Ken Buchanan's new autobiography, *The Tartan Legend* (Headline Books, 213 pages, hardcover, $29.95), it all started for the 1970s-era Scottish lightweight when he was eight years old and saw a movie about Joe Louis.

"There was something about the honesty of all that," Buchanan writes in his candid, unassuming, and effecting book. "Men living on their ability, relying on nobody but themselves. By the time that film was finished, I knew I wanted to be a boxer. And I knew something else: I wanted to be a world champion."

Seventeen years later, in 1970, following 15 rounds against Ismael Laguna in the breath-taking heat of Puerto Rico, Buchanan achieved his goal. He recounts how a self-described "ordinary man" accomplished such an extraordinary thing by dedicating his whole life journey toward becoming a champion. He studied boxing "like a science" and lived by the creed "if you lose your head, you lose the fight." He trained by running up killer hills again and again, and swimming under water until his lungs were about to explode.

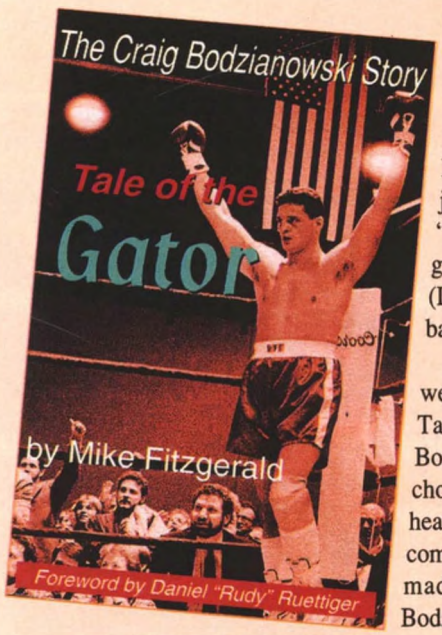
"I had the ability to get back up and carry on any time I landed on my arse," writes Buchanan. "Sometimes I think that is the only difference between winners and losers in life."

Buchanan takes readers through his career fight by fight, and describes how his loss to Roberto Duran haunted him for years. He tells of the down times after his fighting days ended—his wife leaving him for another man, business failures, and an all-too-cozy relationship with alcohol. The book ends with his induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in June 2000.

"I have to say that I burst into tears when I heard about it," Buchanan reveals. "I thought I had been all but forgotten."

We remember you, Ken. And now, with this book, we also know you. You might not realize it, but you are an inspiration to all the rest of us ordinary men.

—Robert S. Griffin



Craig Bodzianowski raised a lot of eyebrows and some bureaucratic hackles when he strapped on a prosthesis where the lower part of his right leg used to be, and then fought his way to a shot at the WBA cruiserweight title in 1990. One of two openly handicapped boxers to fight for a world title in modern times, Bodzianowski, like deaf junior welterweight "Dummy" Mahan before him, lost. But the Chicago man known as "Gator" proved to himself and others that an indomitable fighting heart trumps even two good legs. That's the message of *Tale Of The Gator: The Craig Bodzianowski Story* (Lemieuz International Ltd., 204 pages, softcover, $17.95), an earnest, engaging, but badly punctuated account of Bodzianowski's one-legged pursuit of ring glory.

Bodzianowki was 13-0 and on the verge of a TV fight against former light heavyweight champion Mike Rossman when he lost his leg in a 1984 motorcycle accident. Taught by his dad that "If a man gives up once, he'll give up over and over again," Bodzianowski began training for his comeback in his hospital bed. He got rid of the psychologist pestering him to face up to his disability by asking for his help in hanging a heavybag in the hospital room. Aligned against him were common sense, the state boxing commission, and even Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. But Bodzianowski's determination to fight again made it a mismatch all the way. Getting started wasn't easy. In early workouts, Bodzianowski's artificial leg kept breaking, and "if that happened in a real fight, I would be in more trouble than the proverbial one-legged man in an ass-kicking contest."

Authored by Mike Fitzgerald, this is actually a first-person, as-told-to book. The sometimes stilted narrative, misuse of commas, overuse of exclamation points, and the editing glitches common to self-published works will drive English majors and disciples of Strunk nuts. But as Minnie Pearl used to say about kissing a fellow with a beard, "sometimes you've got to go through some brush to get to a picnic." Told with humor and charm, Bodzianowski's story surmounts its literary handicaps. *(The book is available from the publisher by calling 1-800-950-7723, or via the internet at www.themarketgroup.com)*

—Jean McShane

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
3-10-01	Mount Whitaker KO 2 Oleg Maskaev	HBO	h	B+	A	B-
Who was that guy stretched out at Whitaker's feet and what did he do with Maskaev?						
3-10-01	**Shane Mosley KO 5 Shannan Taylor**	**HBO**	**WBC w**	**A**	**C-**	**B**
Mosley superb as always and not just because he had a second-rate guy in there						
3-16-01	Efren Hinojosa W 12 Lamar Murphy	ESPN2	l	C+	B+	C+
Hinojosa outworks veteran Murphy to take razor-close nod						
3-17-01	Oscar Larios W 10 John Lowey	Show	jf	C+	C+	D+
Except for a mid-fight uppercut that nearly knocked Larios stiff, Lowey never in it						
3-17-01	Johnny Tapia KO 6 Cuauhtemoc Gomez	Show	f	B	C-	B
Heaven help the civilized world when Tapia can't fight anymore						
3-23-01	**Bones Adams W 12 Ivan Alvarez**	**ESPN2**	**WBA jf**	**A**	**C+**	**C**
Adams wins convincingly but not easily to set up showdown with Paulie Ayala						
3-23-01	Fres Oquendo KO 8 Cliff Etienne	Show	h	B-	B+	B
If this surprised you, imagine how Lawrence Clay-Bey feels						
3-23-01	David Tua KO 6 Danell Nicholson	Show	h	A-	C+	C+
Tua was Tua, and Nicholson wasn't quite Lennox Lewis						
3-24-01	Wladimir Klitschko KO 2 Derrick Jefferson	HBO	h	A-	B	C+
Anyone else get the feeling Jefferson is really starting to get comfortable with getting knocked out?						
3-24-01	Oscar De La Hoya KO 5 Arturo Gatti	HBO	w	A	D+	B
Isn't De La Hoya a whole lot more likable when he's fighting rather than talking?						
3-30-01	**Paulie Ayala W 12 Hugo Dianzo**	**ESPN2**	**WBA b**	**A**	**C-**	**C+**
Apparently, the only guy Ayala can look good against is Johnny Tapia						
4-1-01	David Reid W 10 Urbano Gurrola	FOXSN	m	B-	C	C-
Boy, what a difference now that Reid has gotten rid of Al Mitchell						
4-1-01	Juan Manuel Marquez KO 2 Baby Lorona	Uni	f	B-	D-	C
In his last tuneup before Derrick Gainer, Marquez should have chosen a runner, no?						
4-6-01	Terrance Lewis KO 9 Ed Mahone	ESPN2	h	C	B+	B+
Excellent slugfest ends when a straight right drops Mahone on his back; early candidate for kayo of year						
4-6-01	**Frankie Toledo W 12 Mbulelo Botile**	**ESPN2**	**IBF f**	**A**	**C+**	**C**
Who knew Botile was so slow-footed? And who knew Toledo could keep moving all night?						
4-7-01	Fernando Velardez KO 6 Juan Carlos Ramirez	PPV	f	C+	C	B-
We don't know how the hell you get "Bobby Boy" from Fernando Velardez, but good win for the kid anyhow						
4-7-01	Jermain Taylor KO 2 Kenny Stubbs	PPV	m	C	C-	C
Taylor in fairly tough in second outing, comes through with another superb kayo						
4-7-01	Omar Sheika KO 2 Stephane Ouellet	PPV	sm	B	B	B
Say what you will about Sheika's skills, the guy can punch; Ouellet obliterated						
4-7-01	Marco Antonio Barrera W 12 Naseem Hamed	PPV	f	A+	A+	C+
Be honest: Wasn't seeing Barrera push Hamed's face into the turnbuckle worth the 40 bucks?						
4-8-01	Ben Tackie KO 6 Terrell Finger	FOXSN	jw	B-	C-	B-
Tackie rebounds from loss to John-John Molina with workman-like win over journeyman Finger						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Tel—Telemundo

DAVEY'S DOWNFALL

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE

Hilton: Champ gets convicted

It took Davey Hilton 20 years of professional fighting to achieve his dream of becoming a world champion, something he finally accomplished when he dethroned WBC super middleweight titlist Dingaan Thobela last December. But it took only three months for his dream to unravel, as his sexual assault trial ended on March 16 with Judge Rolande Matte delivering a guilty verdict that will, in all likelihood, end the popular Canadian's boxing career.

After hearing 18 days of testimony in January and February—which had much of Montreal abuzz with an O.J.-trial-like fascination—Judge Matte adjourned the case on February 21 to consider her decision. She'd heard the testimony of two sisters, who were pre-teens at the time the alleged abuse began, accusing Hilton of nine counts of sexual assault over a three-year period, detailed testimony that drew hordes of men to line up early each morning in hopes of getting a seat in the courtroom. Ultimately, Matte believed the girls' testimony, describing it as "coherent, logical, spontaneous, and often very artless," and denied Hilton bail after convicting the 37-year-old fighter on all nine counts.

Defense lawyer Paul Skolnik said a jury trial may have been more advantageous to his client, but the decision to have the case heard by a judge alone was made by a previous defense lawyer of Hilton's. Hilton reportedly showed no reaction when the decision was handed down.

"He's the champion of the world," Skolnik said. "He gave it the good fight and he went down swinging. Unfortunately, we didn't win the case, but he gave it the good fight."

Hilton's sentencing was scheduled for shortly after this magazine went to press. If he receives anywhere near the maximum 14 years, it will be hard to imagine him fighting again.

—Eric Raskin

THE GROWIN' SAMOAN

Few fighters in history have seen their fighting weight increase in their prime like David Tua's has. The Samoan heavyweight claims the pounds he's packed on are the result of genetics, not lackadaisical training, and that the added weight hasn't slowed him down. But what does the evidence suggest?

Here are a dozen selected fights from Tua's career, starting with his pro debut and continuing up through his most recent victory. At what weight do you think he was at his best?

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

247 pounds of Tuaman

FIGHT	WEIGHT
KO 1 Ron Humes (12-1-92)	204
KO 1 John Ruiz (3-15-96)	225
KO 12 David Izon (12-21-96)	223
KO 11 Oleg Maskaev (4-5-97)	223
L 12 Ike Ibeabuchi (6-7-97)	226
W 10 Jeff Wooden (3-10-98)	234
KO 1 Eric Curry (9-26-98)	239
KO 10 Hasim Rahman (12-19-98)	224
KO 2 Shane Sutcliffe (10-23-99)	238
KO 1 Obed Sullivan (6-3-00)	253
L 12 Lennox Lewis (11-11-00)	245
KO 6 Danell Nicholson (3-23-01)	247

OUTSIDE THE ROPES

Camacho: Busted for coke possession

Several boxers ran afoul of the law this month, most notably two-division former champion **Hector Camacho Sr.**, who was arrested at an East Harlem nightclub in early-March on charges of cocaine possession. Camacho was one of 13 people busted on drug charges at the Latin Palace that night. He faces up to a year in prison if convicted … WBA featherweight champion **Derrick Gainer** pleaded no contest to domestic battery in early-March, five days after an incident with his estranged wife. Gainer was accused of grabbing his wife around the throat and shoving her down, and was sentenced to 12 months probation by a Florida judge … Former junior flyweight champion **Will Grigsby** entered an Alford plea (a guilty plea in which the defendant maintains his innocence but pleads guilty because there is sufficient evidence to convict him) in mid-March on a felony charge of terroristic threats and a misdemeanor charge of maltreatment of an animal. Grigsby had been charged with assaulting and threatening to kill his girlfriend, as well as with holding dog fights. He was due for sentencing on May 18 … March was a tumultuous month for former lightweight contender **Anthony Fletcher**, who has been on death row since 1993. On March 6, Pennsylvania Governor **Tom Ridge** signed a warrant for Fletcher to be executed on May 3, but one week later, a Philadelphia judge stayed the execution pending further appeals. Fletcher's story and his questionable first-degree murder conviction were detailed in an article in the August 2000 issue of THE RING … Several deaths to report this month, starting with former *New York Times* boxing writer **Phil Berger**, who died of cancer in mid-March at the age of 59. In addition to working for the *Times*, Berger collaborated with **Larry Holmes** and **Joe Frazier** on their autobiographies, authored two other boxing books, and penned the screenplay for the boxing movie *Price Of Glory*, which was released in 2000 … Veteran California referee **Dick Young** died in mid-March at the age of 85. Young was best known for presiding over the 1973 rematch between **Muhammad Ali** and **Ken Norton** in Inglewood … Trainer **Bob Wareing** died suddenly at his home in Virginia Beach in late-February at the age of 50, apparently of a cerebral aneurysm. Wareing worked with the likes of Ali, **Joe Frazier**, **Pernell Whitaker**, and **Arturo Gatti** … **Seraphin Ferrer**, a top French lightweight of the 1950s, died in late-February at the age of 69 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. Ferrer won the French lightweight title in '54, but fell short in a bid for the European lightweight belt in '55. He retired in '58 with a 28-4-3 (20) record … **Laila Ali** signed a deal in mid-March to write an autobiographical book entitled *Reach! Positive Motivational Power In My Life*. Meanwhile, her sister **Khaliah Ali** is shopping her own memoir called *Butterflies And Bees: A Woman's Search For Her Father* … Good news from England: Former featherweight champ **Paul Ingle**, injured against **Mbulelo Botile** last December, was released from the hospital in mid-March and will continue his rehabilitation from his home.

Berger: Dies of cancer at 59

THE PUNCHLINES

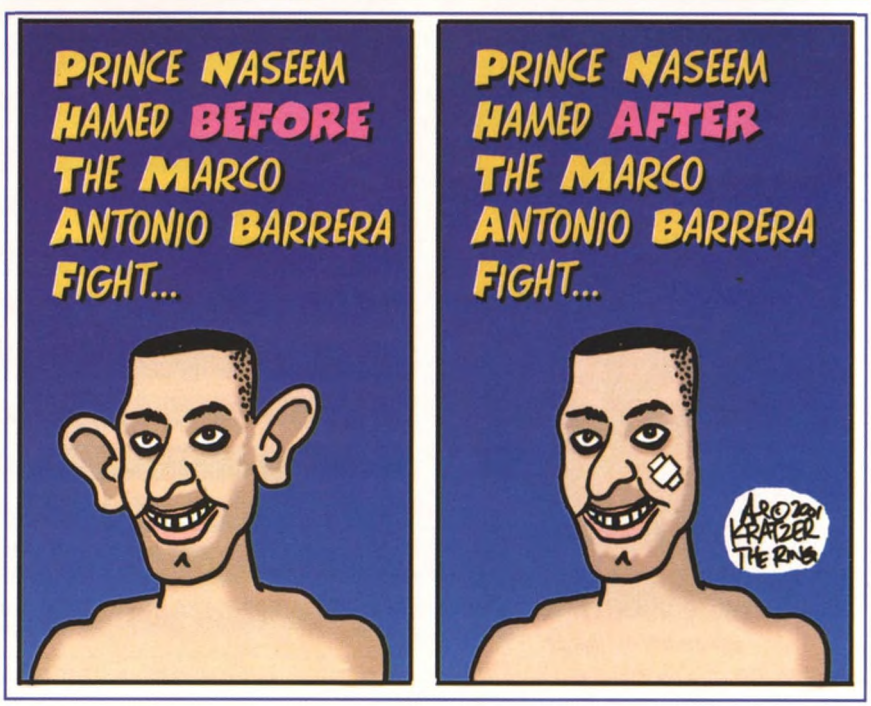
"I use it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. If I didn't buy the grill, I'd probably starve."

—Milwaukee Brewers pitcher Curtis Leskanic, on George Foreman's Lean Mean Fat-Reducing Grilling Machine

"Acting is hard; you're on your feet 18 hours a day. But it's better than getting punched in the face all day. Then again, I am playing Joe Frazier. So I am being punched in the face all day."

—Former world champion James Toney, on his role in the upcoming Muhammad Ali bio-pic

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended April 8, 2000)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Wladimir Klitschko advances from sixth to third on the strength of his second-round knockout of Derrick Jefferson. This bumps John Ruiz, Kirk Johnson, and David Tua all down a spot. Also, though his ranking didn't change, Mike Tyson's record has been adjusted to reflect the Michigan Athletic Commission's decision to change his win over Andrew Golota to a no-contest following Tyson's positive drug test.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: James Butler, who tuned up for his title shot against Sven Ottke with a recent win in Germany, advances from 10 to nine, passing inactive Glenn Catley. Despite his sexual assault conviction, seventh-ranked Davey Hilton will remain in the ratings until sentencing.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Look for Ike Quartey, who hasn't fought since April '00, to be removed from the rankings next month if he still isn't scheduled for a fight.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Former junior welter champion Rafael Pineda's stunning knockout of Oba Carr (fifth last issue) pushes the Detroit veteran out of the rankings. Also falling out is Shannan Taylor (eighth last issue), who was recently obliterated by Shane Mosley. Filling the open spots are former WBA champion James Page at number nine, and Pineda at number 10.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Welterweight
2. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Junior Middleweight
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **ROY JONES**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **MARCO ANTONIA BARRERA**
   Featherweight
6. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Welterweight
7. **LENNOX LEWIS**
   Heavyweight
8. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Middleweight
9. **NASEEM HAMED**
   Featherweight
10. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
    Junior Flyweight

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Former WBA champion Yong Soo Choi (ninth last issue) hasn't fought since December of '99, so he comes out of the ratings. That allows John Brown to advance from 10 to nine, while Alejandro "Cobrita" Gonzalez returns at the 10 spot.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: The massive shakeup at 126 pounds begins at the top, with Marco Antonio Barrera moving up from junior feather and snagging the number-one spot. Naseem Hamed, who was convincingly decisioned by Barrera, drops to number two. Mbulelo Botile plunges from third to eighth following his title loss to Frankie Toledo, who comes aboard at number six. Due to the additions of Barrera and Toledo, two worthy contenders, Manuel Medina (ninth last issue) and Istvan "Ko Ko" Kovacs (formerly 10th), fall out of the top 10.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: With Barrera now at featherweight, everyone moves up a spot, with Bones Adams assuming the top position. Entering at number 10 is Jose Luis Valbuena, who gave Barrera a tough fight last September.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Due to his lackluster showing against Hugo Dianzo, which resulted in a highly disputed decision win, Paulie Ayala, who only recently snagged the top spot from Tim Austin, hands it back and falls to number two. Dianzo, meanwhile, comes aboard at 10, while Cuauhtemoc Gomez (ninth last issue) is removed following his TKO loss to Johnny Tapia.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Leo Gamez (seventh last issue) announced his retirement, and thus comes out of the ratings. Filling in at number 10 is Mauricio Pastrana. Also, look for current number seven Yokthai Sithoar to come out next issue, as he reaches one year of inactivity on April 23.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Melchor Cob-Castro (sixth last issue) is removed due to a pair of losses last year that our editorial staff was only recently informed of. Everyone below Castro moves up, and entering at number 10 is Jose Garcia, who was ranked at strawweight last issue but is now campaigning at 108 pounds.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Garcia is out from number nine, and Songkram Porpaoin comes out from number seven due to inactivity. This opens up two spaces, which were filled by a pair of rising Japanese contenders, Yutaka Niida (ninth) and Hiroshi Nakajima (10th).

POUND-FOR-POUND: Barrera soars from ninth to fifth following the win over Hamed, pushing Oscar De La Hoya down a rung from fifth to sixth. Hamed, meanwhile, falls from to sixth to ninth after suffering his first defeat. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended April 8, 2001

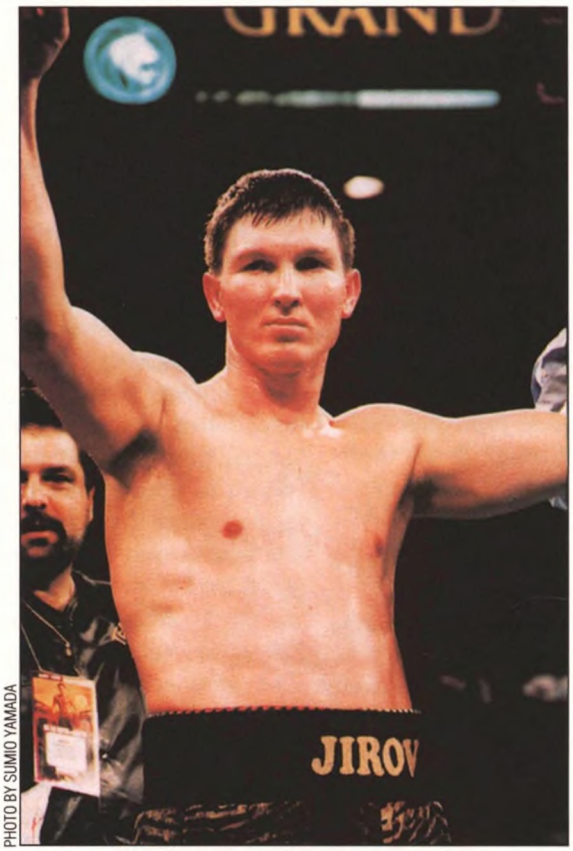


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Vassiliy Jirov solidified his position at cruiserweight with an impressive kayo of Terry McGroom

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **LENNOX LEWIS** — England 38-1-1 (WBC/IBF Champ)
2. **MIKE TYSON** — Catskill, NY 48-3
3. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** — Ukraine 36-1
4. **JOHN RUIZ** — Chelsea, MA 37-4 (WBA Champ)
5. **KIRK JOHNSON** — Canada 30-0-1
6. **DAVID TUA** — New Zealand 38-2
7. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** — Fairburn, GA 37-5-1
8. **HASIM RAHMAN** — Baltimore, MD 34-2
9. **MOUNT WHITAKER** — Mission Hills, CA 23-1
10. **CHRIS BYRD** — Flint, MI 32-2

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **FELIX TRINIDAD** — Puerto Rico 39-0 (WBA/IBF Champ)
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS** — Oxnard, CA 20-1
3. **WINKY WRIGHT** — St. Petersburg, FL 41-3
4. **HARRY SIMON** — Namibia 21-0
5. **FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO** — Spain 51-4 (WBC Champ)
6. **IKE QUARTEY** — Ghana 34-2-1
7. **BRONCO McKART** — Monroe, MI 42-3
8. **YORY BOY CAMPAS** — Mexico 77-4
9. **ALEX BUNEMA** — Dallas, TX 19-2-1
10. **J.C. CANDELO** — Denver, CO 22-3-3

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** — Mexico 53-3
2. **NASEEM HAMED** — England 35-1
3. **ERIK MORALES** — Mexico 40-0 (WBC Champ)
4. **GUTY ESPADAS** — Mexico 33-3
5. **DERRICK GAINER** — Pensacola, FL 37-5 (WBA Champ)
6. **FRANKIE TOLEDO** — Paterson, NJ 40-5-1 (IBF Champ)
7. **JOHNNY TAPIA** — Albuquerque, NM 49-2-2
8. **MBULELO BOTILE** — South Africa 27-2
9. **FRED NORWOOD** — St. Louis, MO 37-1-1
10. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** — Mexico 35-2

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **BONES ADAMS** — Henderson, KY 41-3-3 (WBA Champ)
2. **LEHLO LEDWABA** — South Africa 32-1-1 (IBF Champ)
3. **WILLIE JORRIN** — Sacramento, CA 28-0 (WBC Champ)
4. **MANNY PACQUAIO** — Philippines 31-2
5. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ** — Mexico 28-1-2
6. **CARLOS CONTRERAS** — Mexico 17-4-2
7. **ANTONIO CERMENO** — Venezuela 38-3
8. **OSCAR LARIOS** — Mexico 40-3-1
9. **MICHAEL BRODIE** — England 30-1
10. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA** — Venezuela 18-2-1

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **TIM AUSTIN** — Cincinnati, OH 22-0-1 (IBF Champ)
2. **PAULIE AYALA** — Ft. Worth, TX 32-1 (WBA Champ)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** — Thailand 29-1 (WBC Champ)
4. **ADAN VARGAS** — Mexico 36-2-1
5. **JOHNNY BREDAHL** — Denmark 49-2
6. **JORGE LACIERVA** — Mexico 18-3-3
7. **RICARDO BARAJAS** — Mexico 22-1-1
8. **MAURICIO MARTINEZ** — Panama 19-3-1
9. **GENARO GARCIA** — Mexico 23-3
10. **HUGO DIANZO** — Mexico 26-6-1

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ**
   Germany *32-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND *46-3 (WBA Champ)*
3. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan *28-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England *39-12-1*
5. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ**
   Argentina *31-3-1*
6. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England *28-5*
7. **ARTHUR WILLIAMS**
   Pensacola, FL *34-5-1*
8. **JAMES TONEY**
   Las Vegas, NV *61-4-2*
9. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   France *42-2*
10. **LOUIS AZILLE**
    Jersey City, NJ *15-0-2*

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL *44-1 (WBC/WBA/IBF Champ)*
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany *43-0*
3. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadephia, PA *19-1-1*
4. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX *41-6-1*
5. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL *40-3*
6. **CHRIS JOHNSON**
   Canada *26-2-1*
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA *27-0*
8. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL *17-1*
9. **GREG WRIGHT**
   Bronx, NY *18-6-2*
10. **DERRICK HARMON**
    Chicago, IL *20-2*

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany *22-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales *30-0*
3. **BRUNO GIRARD**
   France *38-2-1*
4. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL *23-1-1 (WBA Champ)*
5. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA *36-7*
6. **THOMAS TATE**
   Houston, TX *39-6*
7. **DAVEY HILTON**
   Canada *39-2-3 (WBC Champ)*
8. **DINGAAN THOBELA**
   South Africa *40-8-2*
9. **JAMES BUTLER**
   Bronx, NY *18-1*
10. **GLENN CATLEY**
    England *26-4*

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA *38-2-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. *32-1-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **KEITH HOLMES**
   Washington, D.C. *35-2 (WBC Champ)*
4. **ARMAND KRAJNC**
   Sweden *24-0*
5. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA *24-4-1*
6. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France *31-4-1*
7. **SYD VANDERPOOL**
   Canada *28-2*
8. **CARL DANIELS**
   St. Louis, MO *47-3-1*
9. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England *30-0*
10. **ANTONIO PERUGINO**
    Italy *16-0*

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA *37-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Whittier, CA *33-2*
3. **ANDREW LEWIS**
   Guyana *20-0-1 (WBA Champ)*
4. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA *31-0*
5. **WILFREDO RIVERA**
   Puerto Rico *32-4-1*
6. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark *24-0*
7. **KOFI JANTUAH**
   Ghana *21-0*
8. **DANIEL SANTOS**
   Puerto Rico *24-2-1*
9. **JAMES PAGE**
   Pittsburg, CA *25-4*
10. **RAFAEL PINEDA**
    Colombia *34-3*

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia *26-1-1 (WBA/WBC Champ)*
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY *26-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. *47-3*
4. **ANTONIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA *34-3*
5. **ENER JULIO**
   Colombia *21-3*
6. **RANDALL BAILEY**
   Miami, FL *23-1*
7. **TERRONN MILLETT**
   St. Louis, MO *22-2-1*
8. **MICKY WARD**
   Lowell, MA *35-10*
9. **JOHN-JOHN MOLINA**
   Puerto Rico *52-6*
10. **BEN TACKIE**
    Ghana *22-2*

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico *42-4-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO *30-2-1*
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA**
   Pittsburgh, PA *32-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **TAKANORI HATAKEYAMA**
   Japan *24-1-3 (WBA Champ)*
5. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN *36-5-1*
6. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan *32-0*
7. **COLIN DUNNE**
   England *32-1*
8. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX *42-5-2*
9. **CESAR BAZAN**
   Mexico *38-4-1*
10. **GILBERTO SERRANO**
    Venezuela *20-5-1*

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI *25-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL *24-0 (WBA Champ)*
3. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil *29-0*
4. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Sacramento, CA *33-1*
5. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV *19-1 (IBF Champ)*
6. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico *34-1*
7. **JONGKWON BAEK**
   South Korea *22-1-1*
8. **LAKVA SIM**
   Mongolia *13-2-1*
9. **JOHN BROWN**
   Atlantic City, NJ *22-8*
10. **ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ**
    Mexico *45-4*

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea *23-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **CELES KOBAYASHI**
   Japan *23-4-3 (WBA Champ)*
3. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela *20-3-1 (IBF Champ)*
4. **IN JOO CHO**
   South Korea *18-1*
5. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines *42-3-2*
6. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela *34-8-3*
7. **YOKTHAI SITHOAR**
   Thailand *23-2-1*
8. **SAMSON TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand *40-0*
9. **ADONIS RIVAS**
   Nicaragua *16-1-1*
10. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
    Colombia *25-2*

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI *29-0 (WBA Champ)*
2. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia *25-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand *39-2 (WBC Champ)*
4. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
   South Africa *18-1*
5. **MEDGOEN TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand *23-1*
6. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand *39-1*
7. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *45-3*
8. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *21-0-1*
9. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines *11-1-1*
10. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
    Venezuela *16-0*

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico *49-0-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea *23-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **PICHIT C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand *23-1*
4. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua *29-2-1 (WBA Champ)*
5. **BEBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia *26-1*
6. **WILL GRIGSBY**
   St. Paul, MN *15-2-1*
7. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico *26-3-1*
8. **HIDENOBU HONDA**
   Japan *22-1*
9. **FAHLAN SAKKREERIN**
   Thailand *43-2-2*
10. **JOSE GARCIA**
    Colombia *24-5-1*

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

1. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico *25-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **KEITARO HOSHINO**
   Japan *21-6 (WBA Champ)*
3. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines *29-6-1*
4. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela *12-2-1*
5. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand *42-1-2*
6. **WANDEE SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand *28-4*
7. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia *33-2*
8. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia *24-0*
9. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
   Japan *13-0-2*
10. **HIROSHI NAKAJIMA**
    Japan *15-2*

CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

If you don't think Muhammad Ali can still get the babes, think again. At a recent sports memorabilia show in Edison, New Jersey, Ali demonstrated that he's still pretty enough to get the ladies' attention—even if they just want him for his autograph.

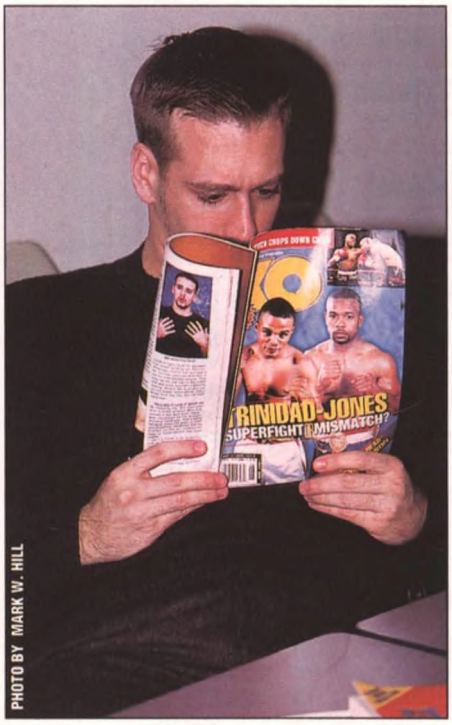


PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Maximum Max: *ESPN2's Max Kellerman seems to be taking particular interest in this issue of* **KO** *as he reads up on his favorite subject, Max Kellerman. If there's anyone who can read about the controversial* **Friday Night Fights** *analyst all day and never get Max'd out, it's Kellerman himself.*

It's not quite as disturbing as the scene in **Hannibal** ***in which Ray Liotta eats a slice of his own brain, but super middleweight Anthony Bonsante does seem to be going out of his way to taste his own blood in this picture. Despite the flow of crimson, Bonsante won his fight against Bill Mastrangelo on ESPN2 in March.***

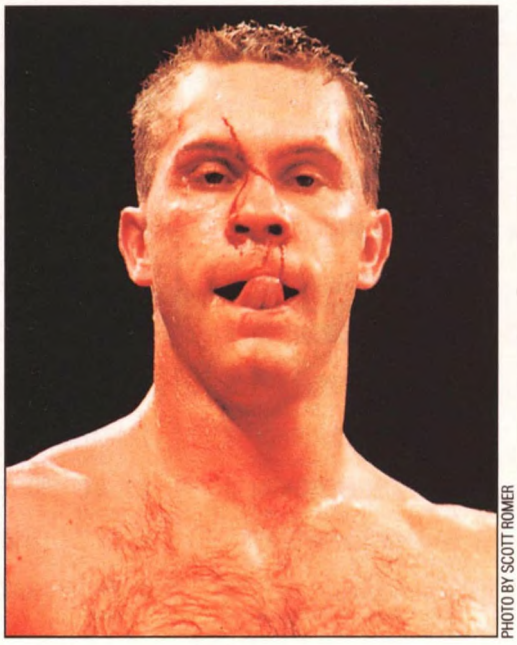


PHOTO BY SCOTT ROMER

Everlast held a boxing clinic featuring Olympians Clarence Vinson and Jerson Ravelo at a New York Macy's store in March, but something tells us some of the folks in attendance were primarily there to see the New Jersey Nets Dancers put on a clinic of their own.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Oscar De La Hoya may have good taste in opponents—taking on Francisco Castillejo should be a rather easy way to pick up a title—but his taste in sunglasses and hairdos is getting increasingly questionable. Oscar, since you're never shy about firing people, how about giving the pink slip to your stylist?

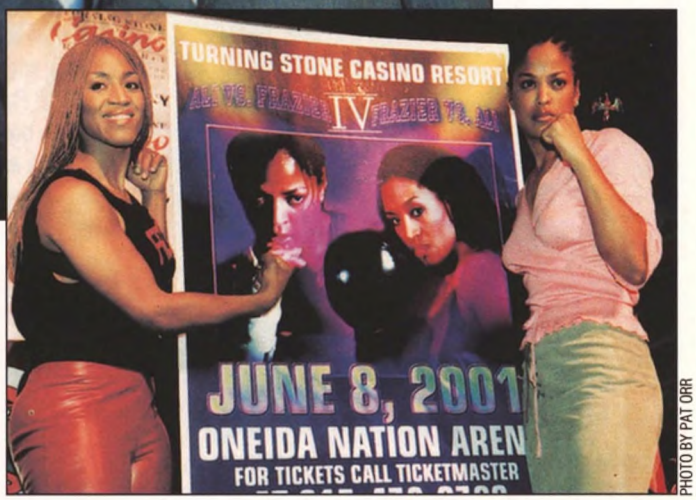


PHOTO BY PAT ORR

As Jacqui Frazier-Lyde aims this right uppercut at the poster version of Laila Ali, you can't help but wonder if that's as close as she'll get to landing a punch against the self-proclaimed "Queen Bee." If you want to find out for sure, and if you have absolutely no respect for the value of money, you can order this fight on pay-per-view on June 8.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

In case you weren't quite sure which of these men has the height advantage, 5'9" David Tua is making it a little more plain to see by lifting 6'8" Mount Whitaker up in the air. As for which guy has the weight advantage, that's slightly tougher to tell.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

This is why you're supposed to wear headgear in sparring. Then-junior welterweight champion Aaron Pryor gets drilled with a left hook by sparring partner Willie Miller while preparing for a 1984 bout with Nick Furlano. Something tells us Miller probably paid for this one.

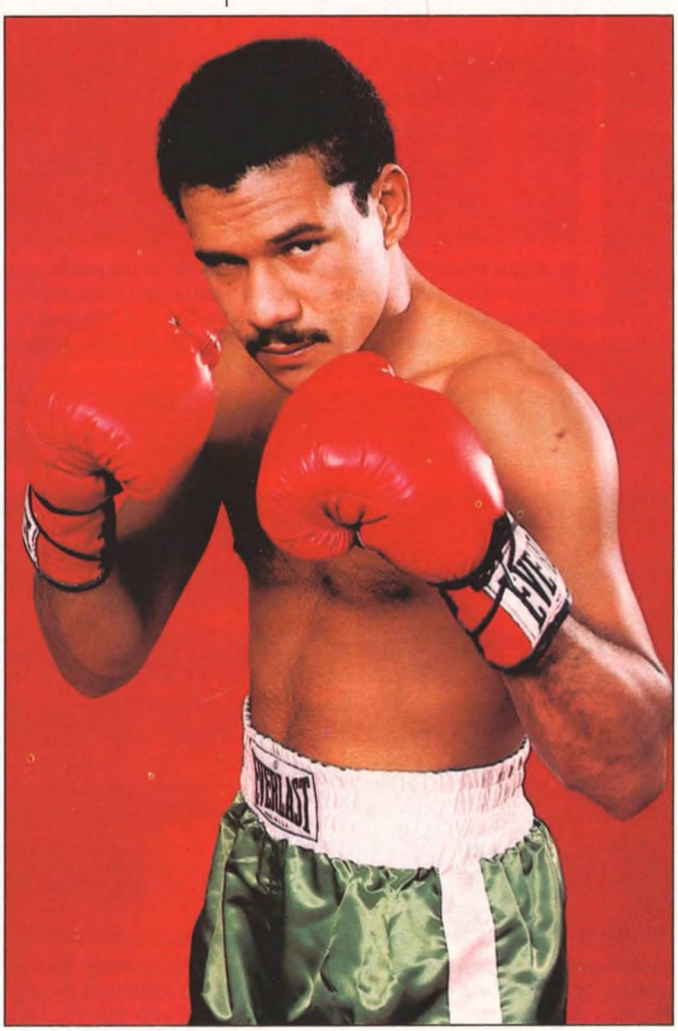
RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

MAKE ROOM

Because it's a sport that's not popular with the mainstream, boxing suffers plenty of slights. Yet another one of those came to mind recently when baseball and football fans got into their annual debate over who was deserving and who wasn't deserving of being inducted into their Halls of Fame. Was Kirby Puckett that much better than Don Mattingly? Should Lynn Swann's intangibles carry more clout than his numbers? Does Bill Mazeroski belong in Cooperstown? How about Bill Parcells in Canton?

Kind of makes you jealous, doesn't it? Face it, we're never going to hear the worthiness of Bernard Hopkins' candidacy kicked back and forth on some sportstalk radio show. And if you ask the guy on the bar stool next to you if he's even heard of Canastota, there's a good chance the reply you get will be, "Can of soda? Yeah, I think they've got a Coke machine in the laundromat next door."



"El Chapo" Rosario should be in the Hall

In that case, allow me to kick off a nice, juicy, one-sided discussion about the International Boxing Hall of Fame. The topic here isn't which of today's champions are on the bubble (that's been analyzed in this publication before), but which of the old-timers who don't have recognition in Canastota ought to. Here are eight boxing figures who either should have been inducted a long time ago, or deserve to get in as soon as they're eligible:

•**Edwin Rosario:** One of the most exciting fighters of the '80s, "El Chapo" was a three-time lightweight king who also won a version of the junior welterweight crown. He beat Loreto Garza and one-time Kronk hot-shot Anthony Jones, and split two fights each with Jose Luis Ramirez and Frankie Randall. You want things to tell the grandkids? Well, Rosario once saved his title and a razor-thin decision by flooring Howard Davis Jr. in the final seconds of the final round.

How hard did Rosario hit? He was the first fighter to knock out Edwin Viruet (who was shot) and Livingstone Bramble (who was at his peak). And two left hooks he landed at Madison Square Garden completely turned around the career of Hector Camacho, who became a runner from that night on. By the way, Rosario beat Camacho; he just didn't get the decision.

•**Dwight Qawi:** Standing a shade under 5'7", Qawi gave away the height advantage just about every time he ever stepped in the ring, yet still won world titles at light heavyweight and cruiserweight.

Sure, the wars had caught up to Matthew Saad Muhammad by the time Qawi dethroned him in 1981. But Saad had been ready to go for quite a while, and nobody else could upend him. Qawi, the former Dwight Braxton, also beat toughies like James Scott, Jerry

Martin, and Eddie Davis, and was part of what was then the biggest 175-pound bout ever when he was decisioned by Michael Spinks in 1983.

When Qawi moved to the 190-pound ranks, he won his second belt, defeated ex-heavyweight champion Leon Spinks in a title defense, and engaged in the greatest cruiserweight war of all-time, dropping a 15-round decision to Evander Holyfield. For what it's worth, and it's worth something, Qawi is the second-best cruiserweight ever.

•**Victor Galindez:** He bled like one of Hannibal Lecter's main courses, got extended the distance far too often, and never enjoyed the reputation of a dominator. But the Argentine has nice numbers. Galindez held the WBA light heavyweight crown on two occasions, and made 10 successful defenses during the four years of his first reign. Overlooked is the fact that after winning the belt in Argentina, he defended it entirely on the road (South Africa, Norway, Italy, the U.S.), no easy task. Among the vanquished: Yaqui Lopez (twice), Eddie Gregory, Richie Kates, Jorge Ahumada, and Mike Rossman (in the rematch).

•**Howard Cosell:** The controversy, pomposity, and bitter final years shouldn't detract from the outstanding work he did at ringside. The memories come in waves: Calling Muhammad Ali "truculent" during that famous interview. Screaming, "Down goes Frazier! Down goes Frazier!" Introducing America to Sugar Ray Leonard at the '76 Olympics. Getting his lip bloodied when Larry Holmes went after Gerry Cooney at ringside one night. And on and on.

Cosell's critics like to say he wasn't, despite what he thought, the reason people tuned in. Wanna bet? You think my TV would have been tuned to George Foreman vs. five pugs if Cosell wasn't there to give the fiasco some sense of importance? The truth is, Cosell was a marvelous interviewer and excellent scene-setter. He was blow-by-blow man, analyst, and interviewer all in one, and no three-man team has ever been as good as he was by himself.

Why isn't Cosell in Canastota, the way that Don Dunphy is? Because "Humble Howard" walked away from the game in 1982, insisting that it was suddenly beneath him. Still, that shouldn't be held against him. For when Cosell *was* on the beat, he gave countless Saturday afternoons one hell of an interesting soundtrack.

•**Carlos Palomino:** He's boxing's version of Puckett, a guy who carried himself with such class and dignity that you want to give him the benefit of any possible doubt. He was never stopped in 38 career outings, and two of his four losses were to a prime Wilfred Benitez and a Roberto Duran who was still a year away from beating Leonard.

When he won the WBC welterweight belt from Briton John Stracey in 1976, Palomino was an underdog fighting on the champion's home soil. And talk about an active titlist. Palomino followed that victory with seven successful defenses over the course of 17 months. If this fighter-turned-actor isn't your idea of a Hall of Famer, perhaps that's understandable, but he still gets the nod from me.

•**Pipino Cuevas:** At one time, he didn't seem worthy, but the years have changed my perspective. Punchers have always been personal favorites. And it's difficult to ignore 11 successful welterweight title defenses, 10 of them by knockout, and half of those stoppages in two rounds. The Mexican was an electrifying presence, even though he spoke no English and smiled about as much as Steven Seagal with an impacted wisdom tooth.

Cuevas' left hook to the point of the chin was textbook, and he was a frightening finisher. Yes, he was nearly embedded in the canvas by a prime Tommy Hearns, the only welter of his era who hit harder than he did. But the voters shouldn't punish Cuevas for running into a legend.

Why doesn't Cayton have a plaque next to Jacobs'?

•**Lupe Pintor:** Another suggestion that might raise some eyebrows, but if fellow bantamweight champion "Joltin'" Jeff Chander was worthy of a spot in the Hall, so, too, is Pintor. Compare the two careers. Chandler made nine successful defenses, including a draw with Eijiro Murata in Japan, and Pintor made eight, including a draw with Eijiro Murata in Japan.

Pintor defeated some quality names, including Carlos Zarate (albeit by disputed decision), Alberto Sandoval, Johnny Owen, and Albert Davila. Pintor also went 14 hellish rounds against a bigger, stronger Wilfredo Gomez in an epic battle for Gomez' 122-pound crown in 1982, and won a second championship, defeating Juan Meza for the WBC super bantamweight crown, in 1985.

•**Bill Cayton:** Along with partner Jimmy Jacobs, Cayton established the world's largest collection of fight films, expertly co-managed the careers of Benitez and Rosario, and helped make Mike Tyson one of the most recognizable faces on the planet. Where would Tyson have been at the start of his career without Cayton and Jacobs? Possibly in jail. Where would ESPN Classic be today if Cayton hadn't sold ESPN his film library? Uh, probably airing a lot more footage of Paul Hornung and Otto Graham and a lot less of Jake LaMotta and Alexis Arguello.

Jacobs already has a plaque in Canastota. And Cayton's belongs right alongside it. ■

NEW FACES

FRED CADENA

Lightweight

By Joe Santoliquito

PRO RECORD

1999				
Sept. 22	Matthew Fernandez, Paterson, NJ	KO 1		
2000				
May 20	Curtis Wilkens, Atlantic City	KO 3		
Oct. 13	Andre Eason, Ledyard, CT	W 4		
2001				
Jan. 11	Rodney Price, Allentown, PA	KO 2		
Jan. 27	Alberto Santiago, Atlantic City	KO 4		
March 24	Arthur Medina, Las Vegas	KO 2		
FIGHTS	**WON**	**LOST**	**DRAW**	**KOs**
6	6	0	0	5

He could be seated next to him on a bus, or on a park bench, or even out there among the many faces in the crowd, attending one of his fights. Fred Cadena wouldn't know. He just knows that one day, after he has a world title belt wrapped around his waist, he'll get a knock on his door, and standing there in the doorway will be his father—greeting him for just the second time in his life.

Cadena will not recognize his father at first, since he's only seen him once, when he was 13. He may listen to what the man has to say, about why he never tried to enter Cadena's life, about why he abused Cadena's mother, about why he left him alone to grow up without a strong male figure to show him the things a boy needs to know. In an odd way, he may even thank the man for instilling the boiling hostility that Cadena has harnessed to fuel a successful boxing career. Then he'll shut the door on him for good.

It's a scenario that plays out over and over in Cadena's mind, and something he's working toward turning into a reality. The 5'7" lightweight is 6-0 with five knockouts, blending his passionate fury with sleek boxing skills to produce an exciting style.

"I know a lot of people grow up without fathers, like Fernando Vargas, but it is tough," admitted Cadena, the only boy in a house full of women, who moved with his mother, Vilma Ocasio, from Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, to Paterson, New Jersey, when he was eight years old. "I met my father one time, when I was 13. We spoke for an hour, that was it. He could be sitting next to me and I wouldn't know him.

"The thing I'll always remember, though, was Parents Day. All of these kids have their parents around together, and I just had one parent, or just my grandmother. It was a little embarrassing. I used to get angry. I guess I still am, because I don't want to see my father at all, because of the stories I've heard. I have

(Continued on page 61)

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OSCAR DE LA HOYA

Things went pretty much as expected in De La Hoya's return to the ring against Arturo Gatti. "The Golden Boy" battered his brave opponent for the better part of five rounds, until Gatti's corner surrendered at 1:16 of the fifth.

PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

Will He Regain His Greatness ... Or Continue To Spin His Wheels?

By Jeff Ryan

"A change of fortune hurts a wise man no more than a change of the moon."
—Ben Franklin

Make no mistake about it, Oscar De La Hoya does more spinning than Michelle Kwan in the long program at the World Figure Skating Championships. According to "The Golden Boy," he's never fought a dumb fight, never made a regrettable business decision, hell, never even had a bad hair day. He handed out more pinks slips than a startup dot.com because, well, all those trainers didn't know how to do their jobs. He sprinted in the late rounds of his battle with Felix Trinidad because, hey, he wanted to show us he could win *that* way. He even kicked the mother of his child out of his house because she alone was poisoning their relationship—not to mention the air, he said, with cigarette smoke.

When it comes to spin doctors, De La Hoya is Marcus Welby, Ben Casey, and Dr. Kildare rolled into one. Of course, there's something even more effective than putting a fancy spin on everything that happens around you, and that's making sure nothing goes wrong in the first place. In choosing Arturo Gatti for a "comeback" foe, Team De La Hoya (and who's on its roster this week?) seemed to be thinking exactly that. For despite Gatti's heart and his hook, the 8-1 odds (they opened at 30-1) reflected everyone's belief that the Canadian was a much better fighter 17 pounds, a few wars, and several dozen stitches ago.

And, wouldn't you know it, the night went pretty much according to plan when you consider that, after the only guy who'd been pictured on the fight poster had finished off poor Gatti with a barrage of bombs at 1:16 of the fifth round, no one in the crowd at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas was saying that De La Hoya was better two superfights, one big lawsuit, and one Grammy nomination ago.

De La Hoya was back looking like De La Hoya, which meant knocking someone out with vicious combinations, sustaining a minimal amount of damage to that album-cover face of his, and smiling an awful lot afterward. And what a change that was from the last time we saw him, when he looked burned out and lost while trying to downplay the heart-wrenching disappointment of a close defeat to Sugar Shane Mosley in their L.A. turf war.

Between that night at the Staples Center last June 17, and De La Hoya's folding and mutilating of Gatti, a lot had happened in our intrepid welterweight's life. Let's see ... De La Hoya broke up with his lover, Shanna Moakler. He cut a debut CD, entitled *Oscar De La Hoya*, and showed he wasn't just another lounge-lizard wannabe a la Joe Frazier, Larry Holmes, and Al Bernstein by earning a Grammy nomination for Best Latin Pop Album.

Angered that his promoter, Bob Arum, suggested he warble full-time lest he wobble as a result of his lack of dedication to the Sweet Science, De La Hoya sued to get out of his contract with Top Rank and won in what has to be one of the biggest upsets since Buster Douglas flattened Mike Tyson. The fighter also dumped longtime cutman Chuck Bodak who, considering the infrequency with which The Golden Boy bled, couldn't have been doing a whole hell of a lot wrong. And, yes, De La Hoya pointed yet *another* trainer toward that exit door with the worn-out hinges. This time, it was Robert Alcazar who was asked to turn in his Enswell.

Welcomed aboard as Alcazar's replacement was Floyd Mayweather Sr., whose fiery personality was supposed to be a much-needed, fire-starting change from the low key approach of the Emanuel Stewards and Gil Clancys. If it's a "yes" man De La Hoya was looking for, though, it was clear following the pasting of Gatti that Mayweather wasn't about to assume that role.

"I don't believe in getting hit, and [Oscar] got hit a couple of times and I didn't like it," the trainer said. "He got scolded a couple of times when he came back to the corner. I haven't had a chance to fine-tune him. You'll see a much better Oscar the next time around."

That next time around will be on June 9, when De La Hoya challenges WBC super welterweight titlist Francisco Castillejo. The Spaniard, who was once stopped by Laurent Boudouani, is a slick boxer who doesn't possess the kind of punch required to keep a De La Hoya at bay. The likely result is a De La Hoya knockout, which is just about the only result that's tolerable as the three-division former titlist tries to stoke interest in rematches with Mosley, who beat him legitimately, and Felix Trinidad, who didn't

PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

De La Hoya's right hand, a weapon he rarely used in the past but promised would be a factor against Gatti, was on the mark all night. But the question remains as to whether the right hand has really improved or Gatti was simply there to be hit.

deserve the decision De La Hoya's curious late-rounds passivity enabled him to receive.

"Oscar is still important to the sport because he has visibility," said trainer and ESPN2 analyst Teddy Atlas. "The only time the game reaches beyond the diehards and into the general public is with marquee fights, and Oscar is one of the few guys who's involved in marquee fights. But Trinidad and Mosley are rolling along, and De La Hoya has to get on his own roll to get lots of people interested in him again."

There's little question about that. The days of De La Hoya causing traffic jams and stampedes, just because he showed up with his hands wrapped and his teeth gleaming, appear to be over. In New York, for instance, De La Hoya-Gatti received amazingly little coverage from a tabloid press more concerned with "March Madness," the Knicks, and baseball's spring training. And the "comeback" of one of the sport's biggest stars failed to even sell out MGM's 13,000-seat Grand Garden Arena. De La Hoya may have gotten the benefit of the doubt from the press and public following close fights with Pernell Whitaker and Ike Quartey, but the sloppy finish against Trinidad, poorly executed game plan against Mosley, and subsequent lengthy hiatus apparently brought that honeymoon to a rude conclusion.

It's a reality that's not lost on De La Hoya, who said before the Gatti bout, "I have to redeem myself against the two fighters I lost to" and stated plainly that it "would end my career" if he faltered against Gatti or Castillejo. How does a fighter of De La Hoya's ability and accomplishments descend to this point, especially in a business in which second, third, fourth, and even fifth chances are handed out the way dry cleaners pass out cheap wall calendars?

That probably has less to do with De La Hoya the fighter (who did rebound from the humiliating backpedal against Trinidad to

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/ALLSPORT

After boxing well for the first 2½ minutes, Gatti got caught late in the first round and went down hard from a left hand. Any fans' hopes that the Canadian underdog might pull off the upset were more or less erased at that point.

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE

It wasn't a completely one-sided fight, as Gatti scored with lefts (above) and rights (below) periodically. New trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr. admits he still has some work to do on De La Hoya's defense.

battle gallantly against Mosley) and more with De La Hoya the person. One senses that he is following in the footsteps of Sugar Ray Leonard, all right, but not as a legendary warrior. Instead, it's as an image-conscious, manipulative phony whose once-valued opinion is now taken with a grain of salt the size of Mount McKinley.

"Maybe the public says to itself that there are enough disingenuous people in boxing, and it doesn't need that from one of its biggest stars, too," said Atlas. "It becomes apparent every time Oscar opens his mouth that he cares only about perception. He thinks he's running a movie production with his career, and that he can keep firing the actors if he doesn't like the script. He acted the same way after this recent fight that he always has: not genuine. The forced smile, making sure his hair was in the right place. That's the way he is, and people have grown tired of it."

De La Hoya's problem has always been that he talks too much. Not like Kevin Kelley, who never shuts up, or Prince

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PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/ALLSPORT

Oscar De La Hoya

(Continued from page 25)

Naseem Hamed, who lectures people about their religion. No, too often in his career, De La Hoya has worked the controls of the steam shovel when it would have been best to simply keep quiet. He should have claimed victory against Trinidad and bitched about the judging, not insulted our intelligence with his explanation for turning cautious. He should have admitted he was too stubborn in having stood in front of Mosley for 12 rounds. And he shouldn't have tried to justify his latest change of trainers by asking aloud, "If someone is not teaching me, then how am I supposed to progress?"

Is there anything De La Hoya says these days that we can take seriously, that hasn't been run through the p.r. firm in his mind, approved, and spit out to advance his agenda? After dispatching Gatti, he said, "It's only the beginning with Mayweather. I only learned about 10 percent. We have a long way to go, baby, a *long* way to go." Was he being sincere or merely saying what he thinks his critics want to hear? Is humility just a means to some end?

De La Hoya will always be a marquee name. The gold medal in Barcelona, that first slicing and dicing of a still-dangerous Julio Cesar Chavez, and the heroic rally against Quartey will assure that. But if he wants to one day be remembered as more than a welterweight Tyson (a guy who was overrated when he stormed through the early part of his career, had his limitations exposed, and never regained the fury or dominance he once had), De La Hoya must capture that super welterweight crown with ease, then defeat at least one of his prior conquerors convincingly. Think about this: After nine years as a pro, 35 outings, and world championships in three weight classes, De La Hoya still hasn't clearly defined himself as a fighter.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/ALLSPORT

De La Hoya has called Mayweather the best trainer he's ever had, but haven't we heard that line before? It's hard to tell when the three-division former titlist is being genuine, and when he's just saying what he wants the boxing world to hear.

"Oscar can win 18 more meaningless titles, but this late in his career, he needs substance," said Atlas. "Does he want to win titles by maneuvering and navigating, or does he want to go down in the record books as the real thing? As always with him, it's going to come down to dedication. I'd tell him to concentrate on just one career: boxing. When you want to fight the Mosleys and Trinidads, the margin for error is slight. If you've got a singing career and they don't, that can cost you in a one-point fight."

As that old heavyweight from Philadelphia once said, a change of fortune really doesn't hurt the wise man all that much. Well, Oscar De La Hoya has certainly had some serious changes in his fortunes over the past year. Perhaps somewhere beneath the facade and the image, he's a lot smarter than we think. Maybe only *he* realizes that sitting in a recording studio actually keeps alive his drive to be a fighter by giving him a healthy dose of diversion. Maybe he finally *has* settled on the one trainer who will bring out his best and earn his undying respect. And maybe De La Hoya does know the key to avenging his dreariest moments and turning himself into the kind of gladiator everyone from *Sports Illustrated* to the bookers for *The Tonight Show* always thought he'd be.

And if not?

Don't be alarmed if the room starts spinning. ■

Jeff Ryan is a freelance writer based in New York and a longtime columnist for this magazine.

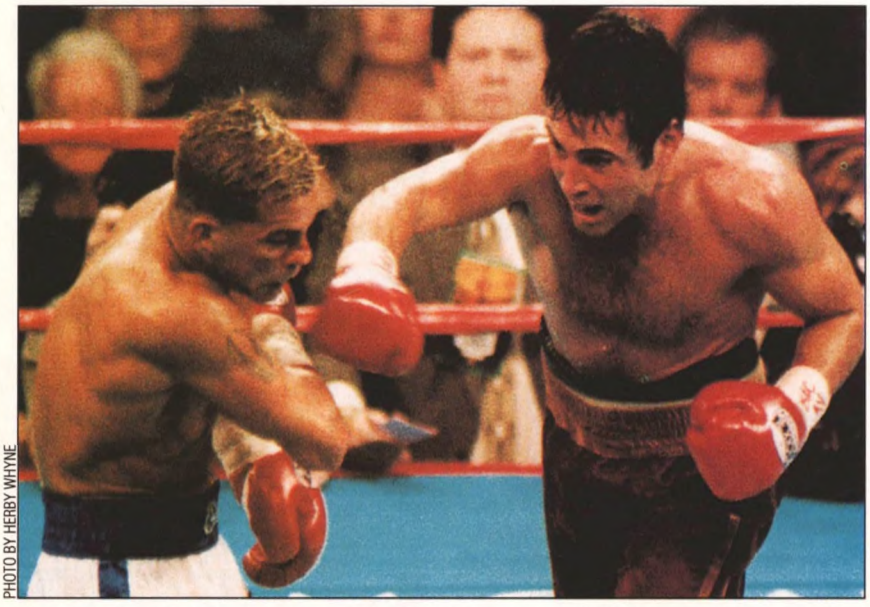

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE

Can De La Hoya duplicate his success against Gatti in rematches with the two men who've beaten him, Felix Trinidad and Shane Mosley? At this point in Oscar's comeback, it's hard to guess how far he'll go.

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Humbling HAMED

Barrera Overthrows The Prince To Become King Of Mexico!

PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA

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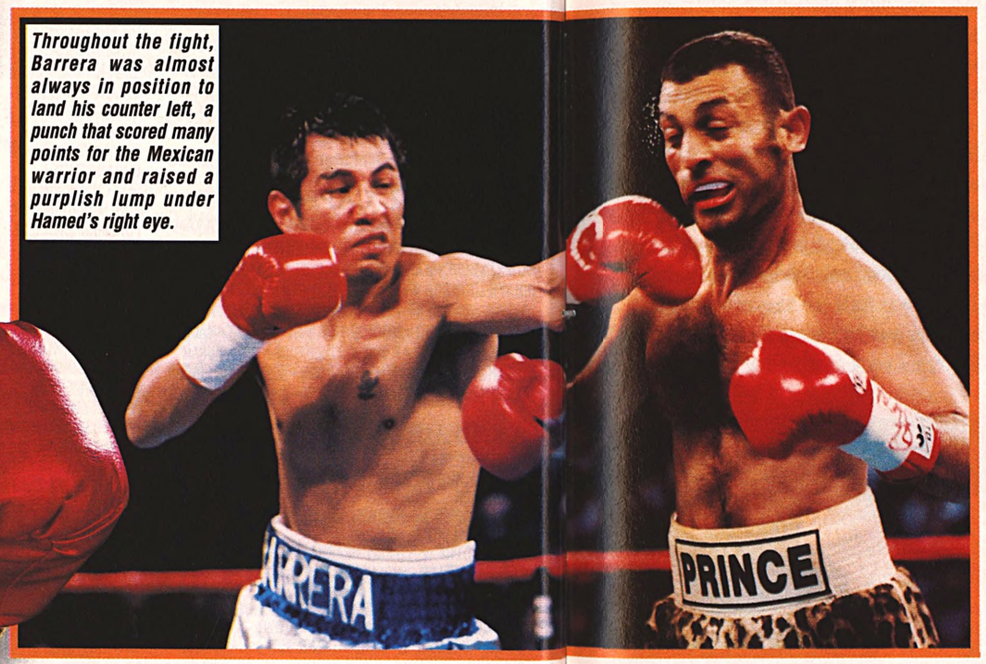

Throughout the fight, Barrera was almost always in position to land his counter left, a punch that scored many points for the Mexican warrior and raised a purplish lump under Hamed's right eye.

Hamed's spectacular entrance on a leopard skin hoop that lowered him to the arena floor ended badly when someone threw a cup of liquid at him. He then opted not to do his flip over the top rope.

By Nigel Collins

It was around 11 a.m. on Sunday, and Marco Antonio Barrera was on his way to a well-deserved breakfast. He seemed strangely anonymous as he walked through the maze of slot machines and blackjack tables at the MGM Grand, where the night before he'd won the richest featherweight prize fight in history. No fanfare preceded him, and although he stopped to pose for a photograph with one fan, for the most part Barrera went unnoticed, just a slender figure in a track suit, accompanied by a few friends and family members.

When he got to the Studio Cafe, Barrera, a genuine man of the people, stood in line with everybody else and patiently awaited his turn to be seated. You couldn't imagine Naseem Hamed, even in the aftermath of defeat, doing likewise, which says a lot about the core differences between the vanquished Prince and the new king of the 126-pound division.

It's easy to understand why the citizens of his native Mexico have taken to Barrera. Theirs is a culture that still considers modesty and a down-to-earth demeanor attributes rather than detriments, a culture where a fighter's fists are still more important than his mouth. And now that he's beaten Hamed, Barrera might finally be ready to assume a title far more important than any belt bestowed by a governing body.

Boxing fans never tire of waiting for "the new" somebody or another, and love to speculate about the next Ali, Robinson, or Marciano. We're so hungry for another taste of greatness past, so eager to drape a new hero with the mantle of his predecessor, half of the time we don't even wait until the original has retired before looking for his replacement. The more protracted the decline, the more likely an old hero will still be taking punches when the hunt for his equivalent begins, which is certainly the case in this particular instance. After all, we've been searching for a new Julio Cesar Chavez since Frankie Randall handed the man generally recognized as the greatest Mexican fighter of all-time his first pro defeat back in 1994.

Although "J.C. Superstar" is currently retired, he hung around long enough to see several of his potential successors come and go. Among the false messiahs who have vied for the position heretofore have been Miguel Angel Gonzalez, Erik Morales, and Barrera himself, who sputtered after a splendid run of 43 straight wins to start his professional career.

Gonzalez, the former WBC lightweight champion, was a strong candidate until he moved up to junior welter and lost to Oscar De La Hoya. Since then, he's been on a slow but steady decline, which pretty much bottomed out when junior middleweight journeyman Manuel Gomez outpointed him in March 2001. But by then we already knew Gonzalez wasn't the new Chavez, as he'd already been held to a draw by the aging original in '98.

Morales, who seemed so promising

When Hamed tried to initiate some of the rough-house tactics he'd used in his October '99 fight against Cesar Soto, Barrera got the upper hand, wrestling Naz to the canvas, where referee Joe Cortez finally succeeded in prying them apart (below).

until fairly recently, is still technically undefeated, but it's difficult to find anybody outside of his camp who thinks he really deserved the decision when he and Barrera hooked up in THE RING's 2000 Fight of the Year. To make matters worse, Morales needed the help of friendly Vegas judges to win the WBC featherweight title from Guty Espadas in his most recent start. He may prove us wrong yet, but right now Morales no longer seems destined for the near god-like status enjoyed by the once-mighty "Lion Of Culiacan."

It was, of course, Barrera's magnificent battle with Morales that reestablished the former's prominence after several years on the periphery. Barrera's struggles began in November '96 when he was rudely introduced to Junior Jones' right hand, an experience that left the Mexican so dazed and legless by the fifth round that his corner jumped into the ring to save him from further punishment. While their intervention resulted in a DQ loss for Barrera, it spared him the ultimate embarrassment of a knockout loss, but his stock took a nosedive nevertheless. True, Barrera did much better in a rematch, but lost a close decision that only partially repaired his reputation. Nobody was calling him the "new Chavez" anymore.

There followed a period of wandering in the wilderness, which included a stint with British promoter Frank Warren. Barrera did, however, put together a series of wins that were meaningless in and of themselves, but eventually led to the Morales match. At the time, Morales was the latest heir apparent to Chavez' mythical throne, and the undefeated "El Terrible" was expected to use his supposedly faded countryman as further confirmation of his own greatness. But while there was glory enough for both men after 12 rounds of unadulterated mayhem, the split decision in Morales' favor was almost universally acknowledged as a stinker.

When an immediate rematch wasn't forthcoming, Barrera seemed to slide back into his post-Jones mode, and following an insignificant one-round knockout of Luiz Freitas, he looked jaded winning a close decision over unheralded Jose Valbuena. There was talk to the effect that the Morales war had taken all the fight out of Barrera. Maybe that's what Hamed and his

brother/manager Riath figured when they agreed to fight Barrera. But because the Mexican was such a huge step up from Augie Sanchez and Vuyani Bungu, nobody seemed to care that Barrera might be past his prime, especially after he showed much of his former pizzazz en route to a sixth-round TKO of old war horse Jesus Salud in December '00.

The Salud victory was the perfect lead-in for the Hamed fight, but most insiders' enthusiasm was tempered by the fact that "The Hawaiian Punch" was more than a decade removed from his short reign as the WBA super bantamweight champion—and conveniently led with his face. Therefore, the oddsmakers figured the Salud performance was just a case of cosmetic matchmaking, and still made Barrera a 3½-1 underdog.

Going in, the majority opinion was that Hamed's punch, considered to be, pound-for-pound, among the sport's most potent, would be too much for Barrera to handle. Nobody could imagine him absorbing a fraction of the blows he took from Morales and still being on his feet when the fight ended. Then there was Naz' unique style, a hybrid of unorthodox moves and innate brilliance that has driven many a competent fighter to the point of utter confusion before they were summarily dismissed by one or two of Hamed's bombs. Only four

SUBSTANCE OVER STYLE

Things began to go wrong for Naseem Hamed even before the fight started. First, he couldn't find a pair of gloves that felt right, then he was doused with a cupful of unidentified liquid as he alighted from the hoop-like device that carried him from the top of the MGM Grand Garden to the floor of the arena. The clincher came when Naz ducked between the ropes rather than performing his trademark flip over the top rope, a decision that was probably prompted by the fact that the fluid on his gloves made it difficult for him to get a secure grip on the ropes.

Harbingers of things to come? Maybe. But omens don't win fights, and it was Marco Antonio Barrera's brilliant execution of a well-considered battle plan that was responsible for the controversial Englishman's first professional defeat. Barrera set aside the macho slugging he employed in his classic conflagration with Erik Morales, and showed the world that he's equally at home deploying his astute boxing skills as he is trading blockbusters in the trenches. It was a total victory not only for the 27-year-old Barrera, but also for old-school boxing, a triumph of order over chaos.

The first round set the precedent for most of what was to follow, as Hamed, eager to deliver the knockout he promised, took the fight to his Mexican rival. Virtually all of his offerings either fell short or were blocked, and Barrera countered with sharp, accurate lefts to the head, several of which buckled Hamed's knees and drew gasps from the thousands of Brits who had journied to Las Vegas to support their countryman.

Hamed, 27, already seemingly frustrated by his inability to hit Barrera, initiated a bit of rough stuff in the second, and both hit the floor in an untidy tangle. Naz' nose began to bleed in the third, and he was rocked by another Barrera hook in the fourth.

Even though Hamed, 126, did somewhat better in the fifth, it soon became clear that he had no answers for Barrera's tight defense, flawless footwork, and jolting counters. Even when he switched from his normal southpaw stance to a right-handed one in the sixth, it made no difference. Barrera, 125½, outboxed him at every juncture and punished both his head and body.

Things continued to worsen for Hamed as the fight progressed, and a counter right shook him in the eighth and forced him to momentarily grasp the top rope for support. Desperate for any edge, Naz clipped Barrera on the break in the ninth, but was answered in kind before he could scamper out of range.

Barrera rocks Hamed's world

Knowing he needed a knockout to win, Hamed gamely traded with Barrera in the 10th, and managed to have his best round of the fight. But he couldn't hurt his rival, who quickly reestablished his authority by landing the first of several stinging combinations to the head early in the 11th.

Barrera, 53-3 (38), added the final insult in the 12th round, first battering Hamed, 35-1 (31), into the ropes, then bulldogging him head-first into the turnbuckle pad. Referee Joe Cortez (USA) docked Barrera a point for the blatant infraction, but by then a decision victory was well beyond Hamed's reach.

The unanimous decision from the trio of Nevada judges—Duane Ford (115-112), Patricia Jarman-Manning (115-112), and Chuck Giampa (116-111)—was a bit more generous to Hamed than THE RING's 118-109, but at least there was no controversy.

"He won the fight clearly in my mind," said a gracious Hamed, whose distress was soothed to a degree by his $6.5-million purse. "Credit is due to him; he was better than me tonight. This was my first loss. I took it like a champion, and I'll be back."

"It was a very hard fight," said Barrera, who took home a career-high $1.9-million. "He's used to fighting Mexican fighters who don't know tactics. Today, I beat him at his own game."

Promoter: Prince Promotions, Let's Get It On Promotions
Television: TVKO
(4-7-01)

—NC

Although it was basically a one-sided fight, Hamed did land his share of punches, including this right hook. But Barrera absorbed Naz' punches well and was never even close to being hurt or stunned.

of Naz' 35 previous victims had lasted long enough to hear the final bell, and Hamed promised to make Barrera knockout casualty number 32.

"I'm in there to get the back of your head dirty," Hamed told Barrera. "I'm coming there to knock ... you ... out."

The soft-spoken Barrera was no match for the bombastic Brit in a war of words, and besides, talking trash has never been his style. But beneath his reserved demeanor the Mexican warrior is a man of both passion and sensitivity.

"I wish the people would now believe in me," he said after the biggest victory of his career, in obvious reference to those many who had written him off after the Jones losses and sold him short prior to the Hamed fight. Beating an international star of Hamed's status was not only a personal triumph, but also a matter of great pride to millions of Barrera's countrymen, the very people who will ultimately decide whether or not he is worthy to walk in Chavez' giant footsteps.

Of course, when we speak of any fighter as being the "new" somebody or another, we don't actually mean that he's replaced the original. There will never be another Chavez, just as there will never be another Ali, Robinson, or Marciano. Even so, Barrera is on the cusp of earning a place in the fans' hearts roughly equivalent to that which Chavez occupied at the height of his popularity.

As a personality, it's unlikely that Barrera will ever be quite as charismatic as the more gregarious Chavez. He's also less likely to be found pounding down Coronas with the boys at the corner cantina. But as fighters, they share a common heritage as graduates of the old school of boxing, a pair of warriors steeped in the traditional techniques of the ring. Like practically all Mexican fighters, Barrera has a grinding offense, featuring a paralyzing left hook to the liver. But, as he so clearly demonstrated in the Hamed fight, he's also capable of being a disciplined boxer, a valuable asset lacked by many of Mexico's fighting icons.

It is this very versatility that could be the key to Barrera becoming a very special fighter. The greatest irony was not that he outboxed Hamed, but rather that he did it by using the traditional boxing methodology Naz never bothered to master. In the process, he turned Hamed's world inside out, and for the first time in his career, The Prince could neither hit his opponent cleanly nor avoid the punches coming in his direction. It must have been a painful revelation.

An indication of Barrera's growing popularity was the thousands of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans amidst the crowd of 12,847 at the Grand Garden Arena. They were among the first to arrive, filling the cheap ($75) seats with clusters of

Viva Mexico! A happy Barrera acknowledges the cheers of his fans after scoring the most important victory of his career. The atmosphere created by the raucous crowd of 12,847 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena added greatly to the event.

happy, chanting, flag-waving fans, eager to pit their vocal cords against the equally vociferous English contingent on hand to root for Hamed. Together, they created a marvelous atmosphere that almost compensated for the fact that it was too one-sided to be a good fight.

"I've never seen that much excitement for two featherweights," said HBO Sports/TVKO Senior Vice President Mark Taffet, who estimated that when all the numbers are crunched, the pay-per-view would do close to 250,000 buys and break the $10-million ceiling. "It's completely unheard of in this business for featherweights to generate that kind of money."

This is especially good news for Barrera, who, according to Taffet, "received tremendous support in the Hispanic market."

Who Barrera will fight next had yet to be decided at press time. But his contract with Hamed had a return bout provision, and at the postfight press conference Naz indicated he wanted to exercise the rematch option "maybe at the end of the year." Another Barrera-Morales bout would also be a big attraction.

"Either fight is viable," said Taffet. "The numbers Barrera and Hamed did created a whole new level for featherweights and sets up the possibility of a tremendous round-robin between Barrera, Hamed, and Morales."

Barrera, with his victory over Hamed and de facto win over Morales, already has a leg up in any series involving this trio, and also seems to be taking tremendous strides toward gaining Chavez-like prestige.

"Barrera was headed that way before the Junior Jones fight," said Don Chargin, the Hall of Fame promoter who has worked with virtually all the major Mexican and Mexican-American stars during his lengthy career. "Then, after the Morales fight, they really accepted him again. Now that he's beaten Hamed, there's no telling how far he can go, especially with the confidence it gave him."

Chargin is not alone in his assessment.

"Chavez is gone, so the Mexican boxing community is waiting for a new hero," said Roberto Raijar, a veteran California columnist with his finger on the pulse of the Latino boxing market. "So, yes, Barrera could be on the same level as Chavez used to be, but it depends on how long he lasts. This is boxing, after all, and you never know what's going to happen."

A certain Anglo-Arab Prince, recently demoted to commoner, would undoubtedly agree. ■

A bruised Hamed was classy in defeat, giving due respect to the man who handed him his first pro loss after 35 straight victories. "He was better than me tonight," Hamed said.

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PHOTOS BY MARK W. HILL

Most readers of THE RING *are probably regular* ***Friday Night Fights*** *viewers, if not strictly for the fights themselves, then certainly to hear the latest rant from studio co-host Max Kellerman or to see clips from recent big fights they didn't get to watch live. In a relatively short period of time, ESPN2's weekly, 2½-hour boxing program, which debuted in October 1998, has become a significant part of the sport's landscape, a reassuring staple where boxing junkies can get their fix on a regular basis.*

For viewers, it's simply a Friday night ritual: You turn on the television, sit down, and watch. But to the folks who make the program possible, it's a complicated process, one that involves a whole lot of creativity, technical expertise, planning, and a measure of good luck. In order to give a better idea of what's involved, THE RING *sent teams to Bristol, Connecticut, home of the ever-expanding ESPN headquarters, and Philadelphia's Blue Horizon, site of the March 16 show.*

In Bristol, Kellerman, studio cohort Brian Kenny, and coordinating producer Bill Graff played host to Associate Editor Joe Santoliquito and staff photographer Mark Hill. In Philly, Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins sat ringside, directly behind color analyst Teddy Atlas and blow-by-blow man Bob Papa. Meanwhile, Managing Editor Eric Raskin spent the evening observing what goes on in the production truck, while freelance photographer Jeff Blackwell roamed the Blue, capturing the appropriate images.

Actually, there's a lot that goes on you don't see watching from the comfort of your living room couch. It takes a crew of approximately 20 people on site and a corresponding number in Bristol to make it all happen, and even then, as you will learn, the unexpected can occur at any time.

On this particular night, the heat was on Rob Beiner to deal with the unexpected. Beiner normally serves as producer, but slid over to the director's chair because one member of the regular staff was absent.

"My job," Beiner said, "is to make sure that all the puzzle pieces fit together, that the show goes seamlessly from one fight to another. And I also have to make sure that we get in all of our obligations, such as commercials, clips, graphics, etc., along the way. There's an ongoing conversation between the studio, the production truck, and the on-air talent. We've got to keep the pictures and the announcers in sync.

"During the show, I have to think ahead two or three rounds. I have to think, ***What if the fight ends now? What are we going to do next?*** *The worst thing is to give the viewer an opportunity to turn the dial. But I'm not just the producer; I'm a fan. So I think about what I would want to see if I was sitting at home watching."*

HBO's Larry Merchant recently noted that "boxing is the ultimate in reality TV." ***Friday Night Fights****, as you are about to see, proves his point.*

This is what the* Friday Night Fights *studio set looks like right before Max Kellerman and Brian Kenny go on the air for ESPN2's weekly boxing program, the studio portion of which is broadcast from the ESPN complex in Bristol, Connecticut (right).

7:12 p.m. *(studio):* The entire Bristol team gathers in the control room. Graff touches base with the crew in Philadelphia to find out what's happening on their end and to try to work out any emerging technical problems.

7:50 *(ringside):* Atlas, wearing a green sports coat for St. Patrick's Day, reads the script he wrote for "Atlas' World" while watching the pre-taped segment on one of the four monitors on the table in front of him and Papa. Afterward, he explains that when one of the boxers doesn't speak English, instead of doing spots with each where they demonstrate tactics, he simply puts together clips of them fighting.

8:45 *(studio):* Kellerman and Kenny go to a separate studio on the ESPN campus to start taping the opening of the show.

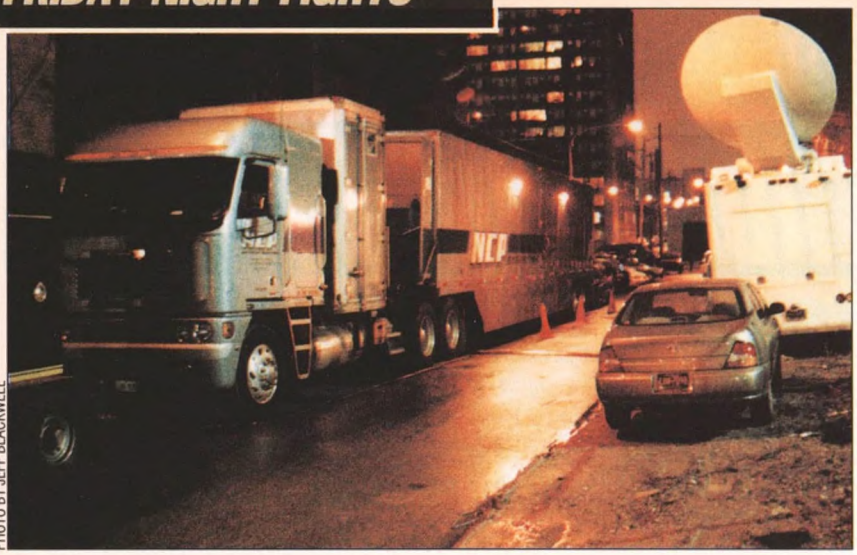


PHOTO BY JEFF BLACKWELL

ESPN2's production truck and satellite dish parked in an alley alongside of the Blue Horizon in Philadelphia for the March 16 card. It takes an on-site crew of approximately 20 to televise the fights.

The studio is divided by white walls so thin you could punch your fist through them. The set is very bare-bones. There are three cameras pointed at Kellerman and Kenny, and the table they sit behind has monitors that show what the TV audience is seeing.

8:48 *(production truck):* Producer Brian Zwolinski, one of six people crammed into the tiny main room of the truck, gives Papa the word to run through a mock intro. Papa mumbles his lines humorously, hums along with the *FNF* theme song, and even does some ad-libbed rapping.

9:00 *(production truck):* When the program begins, Zwolinski cues ring announcer Ed Derian almost immediately. Beiner, watching Zwolinski do what is normally his own job, tells Zwolinski he cued Derian a minute too early. It's interesting to learn that ESPN2 is constantly cuing the ring announcer, even though they don't actually use him on air much.

9:00 *(studio):* There is quiet on the set as Kenny and Kellerman go on.

9:02 *(ringside):* A problem with Derian's microphone has technicians frantically try to unscramble the mass of wires and cables underneath the ring, searching for the bad connection. By 9:05, the problem is fixed. Meanwhile, the first bout, a scheduled 10-rounder between welterweights Curtis Barker and Luther Smith, begins.

9:03 *(studio):* Kellerman and Kenny begin to pass their down time talking about the how the New York Yankees will do in the coming baseball season. The Bristol crew agrees that quick knockouts can be good for them because they provide more air time for the studio guys, while also allowing more fights and fighters to get shown.

9:07 *(ringside):* Between rounds, CompuBox stats are handed to Atlas and Papa, written on a piece of paper attached to a clipboard. No high tech stuff here.

9:19 *(production truck):* After round four, they go to an ad, and Beiner tells the tape guys, "Record the output of Camera 3" as the doctor checks a cut above Smith's left eye. By the time the commercial is over, the bout has already been stopped, with Barker declared the TKO winner.

9:22 *(production truck):* Zwolinski tells Atlas not to go anywhere as they get ready to talk about Sugar Shane Mosley in the studio. Moments later, he says Atlas has five minutes to go to the bathroom. Then he changes his mind, decides there isn't time, and tells the color analyst he can't take off, but it's too late; he's already gone.

9:25 *(studio):* The "Classic KO," featuring Primo Carnera, is shown. Kellerman uses a line he brought up in the production meeting *(see sidebar on page 37)* about how Carnera thought he was winning his fights legitimately, and Kenny laughs out loud when he sees how illegitimate this particular stoppage looks.

9:27 *(ringside):* Atlas returns to ringside, brushing rain water off his coat and hair. "I had to take a piss, but didn't have time to go to the bathroom [which is at the opposite end of the arena], so I had to run outside," says Atlas, laughing. "This ain't HBO. I don't know if [Larry] Merchant

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Kellerman looks slightly aprehensive as makeup artist Linda McGovern moves in to apply the finishing touches. Maybe he'd be more comfortable with a cutman.

and [Jim] Lampley could handle these conditions."

9:28 *(ringside):* Atlas, getting ready to go on the air with Kellerman and Kenny, asks the producer, "How long do I have?" Zwolinski responds, "Between 30 seconds and five minutes." Atlas laughs, continues fixing his hair, and subtly scratches his nose with his middle finger to the amusement of the gang in the truck watching him on their monitors.

9:35 *(production truck):* During a commercial break, the crew is prepping Papa and Atlas for an upcoming segment showing a clip of Kitten Hayward vs. Curtis Cokes at the Blue in 1964. Papa and Atlas don't seem to know a thing about what

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Countdown to fight time: Studio hosts Kellerman and Kenny check out a fight tape on the big screen as the cameras move in for the start of the show.

THE BATTLE PLAN

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Associate Editor Joe Santoliquito (far left) looks on at production meeting

We see Max Kellerman and Brian Kenny on Friday nights making it look so effortless. They segue from one topic to the next as smoothly as Shane Mosley puts his combinations together, yet what viewers see is just a small glimpse of what actually goes into the studio segment of *Friday Night Fights*.

Everything starts at the production meeting held around 4:30 p.m. on Fridays, involving Kellerman, Kenny, the coordinating producer, the producer for the show that evening, the director, and the remote director who works as the conduit between the remote location and the control room at ESPN in Bristol. The production meeting is used to cull the news and information that has been gathered over the course of the week and create an order for the show. The production team puts together a script that breaks down the show by the second, but there is constant adjusting and readjusting during the course of a program, simply because of the unpredictable nature of a boxing event.

"We hope everything works out with each show, and then we make sure Max doesn't kill us," said coordinating producer Bill Graff, joking about the studio analyst's penchant for making controversial comments.

The Friday afternoon meetings usually take about an hour, but on this particular Friday, the production team was waiting on Kenny, who was stuck in traffic after arriving back from Florida (with a tan), where he'd covered spring training for ESPN's *Baseball Tonight*. When Kenny arrived, Graff brought him up to speed on who would be fighting that night, and then the two went over the correct pronunciations of the fighters' names. Kellerman and Kenny then ran through all the hot issues in the sport, kind of a rehearsal for what they would talk about later on the air.

The main topic of the meeting, however, was a thorny one, involving the tragic state of Greg Page, the former WBA heavyweight champ who was in a coma after suffering a knockout on March 9 at a club show in Louisville, Kentucky. ESPN had obtained rare footage of the fight between Page and Dale Crowe, footage that would answer some questions as to what exactly happened. Graff, who knew the issue had to be handled delicately, asked Kellerman how he wanted to approach the topic.

"I don't want it to seem like we're slamming a guy who's in bad shape," Kellerman said. "Seeing as how Page has had a tragic end here, how much of his career do you guys want to explain?"

"I think we have two jobs," Graff responded. "First, is to tell people what happened, because no one has seen the video. Then second, explain to people who Greg Page was."

The meeting concluded with everyone convening in a video room, watching footage of the Page-Crowe fight. What would ultimately be only about a two-minute segment on the air took a large chunk of the afternoon to arrange, and that's typical of a show that isn't quite as simple to put together as Kellerman and Kenny make it look.

—Joe Santoliquito

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Kellerman, coordinating producer Bill Graff, producer Charles Coplin, and production assistant Chris Trinidad watch Greg Page tape

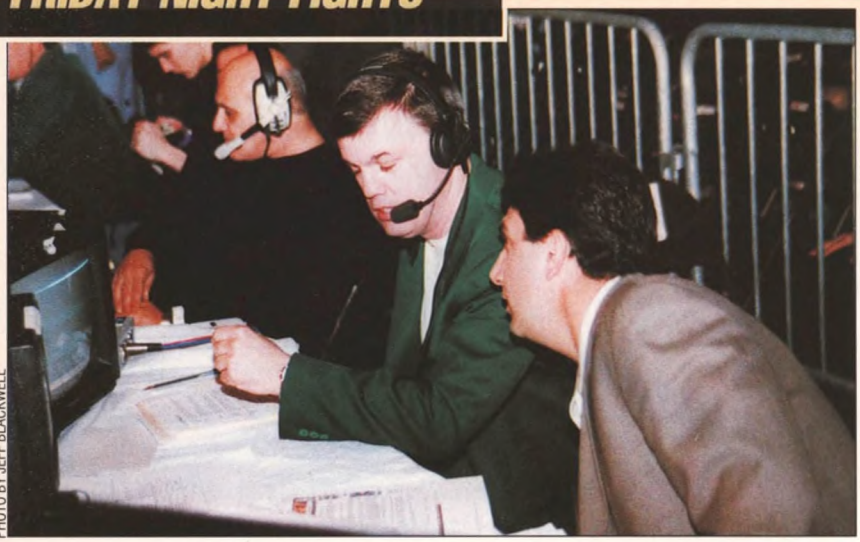


PHOTO BY JEFF BLACKWELL

Teddy Atlas and Bob Papa (right) check their notes prior to the opening bell at the Blue Horizon. Despite all the research they do, the unexpected still usually crops up.

happened in the fight or where the fighters were in their careers at the time, so Zwolinski frantically goes into his bag, pulls out some notes, tells them the details, and Papa and Atlas pull it off smoothly on the air, sounding like they know all about this fight, when in fact 30 seconds earlier they didn't have a clue.

9:36 *(ringside):* The second TV fight, a scheduled six-rounder between super middleweight Randy Griffin and Ronald Boddie, begins.

9:40 *(production truck):* The crew talks to promoter J Russell Peltz, determining which fight will be next depending on how quickly this one ends. Zwolinski emphasizes that he wants the main event in the ring at 10:30.

9:42 *(production truck):* When Boddie goes down for a fourth time just before the bell ending the second round, Zwolinski tries to stay there instead of going to commercial, but it's too late; the ad is already rolling.

9:42 *(studio):* The relaxed atmosphere in the studio quickly changes as it becomes apparent the Griffin-Boddie fight is ending. Kellerman makes an astute comment off the air that Boddie's corner should come to his rescue, instead of forcing him to quit on his stool. Moments later, after the fight has been stopped, Kellerman communicates those thoughts to the viewers, stating: "The onus should be taken off the fighter by the corner; Boddie's corner didn't do that."

9:52 *(ringside):* Fan Dennis Peterson sits in with Atlas for the third televised fight, a junior welterweight six-rounder between Juan Cruz and Andre Eason. Peterson won a day with Atlas at an auction to raise money for the Dr. Theodore A. Atlas Foundation, a charity Atlas established to honor his father and help underprivileged children. (For more information on the foundation phone 718-980-7037 or log onto www.dr-atlasfoundation.org)

9:57 *(production truck):* Beiner and Zwolinski decide they want shots of Zab Judah and his father Yoel (Eason's trainer) at ringside when they come back from a commercial during the Eason-Cruz fight. They go to break a second early, just before the bell rings, so they can come back a second early.

10:00 *(production truck):* The idea with the Judahs doesn't quite work. They briefly show Zab at ringside, but the action has already started before they can show Yoel.

10:01 *(ringside):* When the crowd comes alive during the second-round action, Atlas turns and shows the notes he made before the fight, pointing to a line that reads, "Should be a good one." During a crucial point, Atlas balls his hands into fists and rolls his shoulders, as if he wishes he could get in the ring and make the moves he's telling the viewers the fighters should be making.

10:05 *(production truck):* There's a bizarre glitch, as a graphic of Yoel Judah surrounded by boxes and shadows somehow appears on screen, only lasting about a second. Nobody in the truck seems to know why it happened, and nobody gets too worked up over it.

10:14 *(production truck):* With Eason-Cruz in round five, Zwolinski says, "At this point, the main event's next no matter what."

10:20 *(production truck):* During a commercial, they set up a split-screen shot of the fighters getting ready for the decision (which Eason will win unanimously). There's another discussion, meanwhile, of when Atlas can go to the bathroom.

10:22 *(studio):* Kenny makes a nice segue to a discussion of Greg Page. *FNF* shows previously unaired footage of the fight in which Page was injured, showing two different angles of the knockout. They then air a clip from an interview with Association of Boxing Commissions President Greg Sirb, which Papa had conducted about two hours earlier at the Blue.

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Back in a darkened control room at the studio in Connecticut, various ESPN personnel watch the procedings at the Blue Horizon on a bank of monitors.

10:28 *(ringside):* Atlas is getting ready to again go on air with Kellerman and Kenny, and is again told he'll get between 30 seconds and five minutes.

10:32 *(production truck):* Zwolinski tells coordinating associate director Dave Clancy to tell the team in Bristol not to let Kellerman ask Atlas another question because they're running out of time, but the instant he says that, Kellerman launches into another question—which takes him nearly 45 seconds to ask and causes the segment to run several minutes over.

10:32 *(studio):* As Atlas and Kellerman go back and forth, the control room gang grows tense, aware that the talent is being somewhat long-winded.

10:40 *(ringside):* Derian introduces the main event between Lamar Murphy and Efren Hinojosa, a 12-rounder for the vacant USBA lightweight title. The bout gets off to a slow start.

10:46 *(studio):* Charles Coplin, the producer in Bristol, starts to have concerns that the main event could run over. Jerry Daniels, manager of remote productions, calls the people at *NHL Tonight*, the show following *FNF*, to let them know that they may run 1 minute 30 seconds over the time limit.

PHOTO BY JEFF BLACKWELL

Undefeated super middleweight Randy Griffin warms up for the* Friday Night Fights *camera in his dingy Blue Horizon dressing room. A few minutes later, he ran his record to 6-0, all via knockout.

PHOTO BY RAY BAILEY

By the time the scoring blooper was straightened out and Efren Hinojosa was awarded the USBA lightweight belt,* Friday Night Fights *was off the air, and viewers were still under the false impression that Lamar Murphy had won via split decision.

10:56 *(production truck):* Papa can be heard saying off-camera between rounds, "Not a very Blue Horizon-like fight."

11:01 *(production truck):* The graphics team of Cathy Knauer and Kaare Numme is having trouble punching in Atlas' scorecard. Two minutes later, they finally get it up and running and put the chyron on the screen, but Zwolinski doesn't communicate to Papa and Atlas that it is coming, and neither one comments on it for the few seconds it's visible.

11:02 *(ringside):* The bout heats up, with Murphy, the crowd favorite, working hard to erase Hinojosa's early lead. Most rounds are hard-fought, close, and difficult to score. Several times between rounds, Atlas asks, "Who did you have that round?"

11:03 *(studio):* The control room likes the improved action in the Hinojosa-Murphy fight, but are still hoping for a knockout to eliminate the possibility of running over.

11:20 *(production truck):* Clancy says, "If it goes the distance, we're taking it off the air," meaning there won't be time to send it back to Bristol for Kellerman and Kenny to wrap up.

11:32 *(ringside):* After having visible difficulty deciphering the scorecards, Derian announces Murphy as the winner by split decision.

11:32 *(production truck):* As soon as the decision has been announced, *FNF* goes off the air, 2 minutes 50 seconds late. The people in the truck say "Good show" to each other and shake hands.

11:33 *(production truck):* Papa's voice comes into the truck saying, "Hold on, we made a mistake!" Two of the five cameras have already shut down, but the others keep rolling.

11:34 *(ringside):* With many of the fans already heading for the exits, Derian grabs the microphone and repeats several times, "Will both fighters please return to the ring." It turns out that although Derian had read the numbers correctly, they'd been transposed so it appeared that Murphy had won a split decision, when in fact two of the three judges scored for Hinojosa. Derian announces the correction.

11:40 *(ringside):* "We were off the air," Beiner tells THE RING a few minutes later. "As far as the viewers are concerned, Murphy won the fight. We immediately informed *SportsCenter*, and it's up to them whether or not they say anything."

11:41 *(production truck):* "*SportsCenter* doesn't care about us," says Zwolinski.

He was right. *SportsCenter* did not give a corrected result. ■

ROCKING THE WORLD!

What Rahman's Victory Means To Boxing

By Johnnie Whitehead

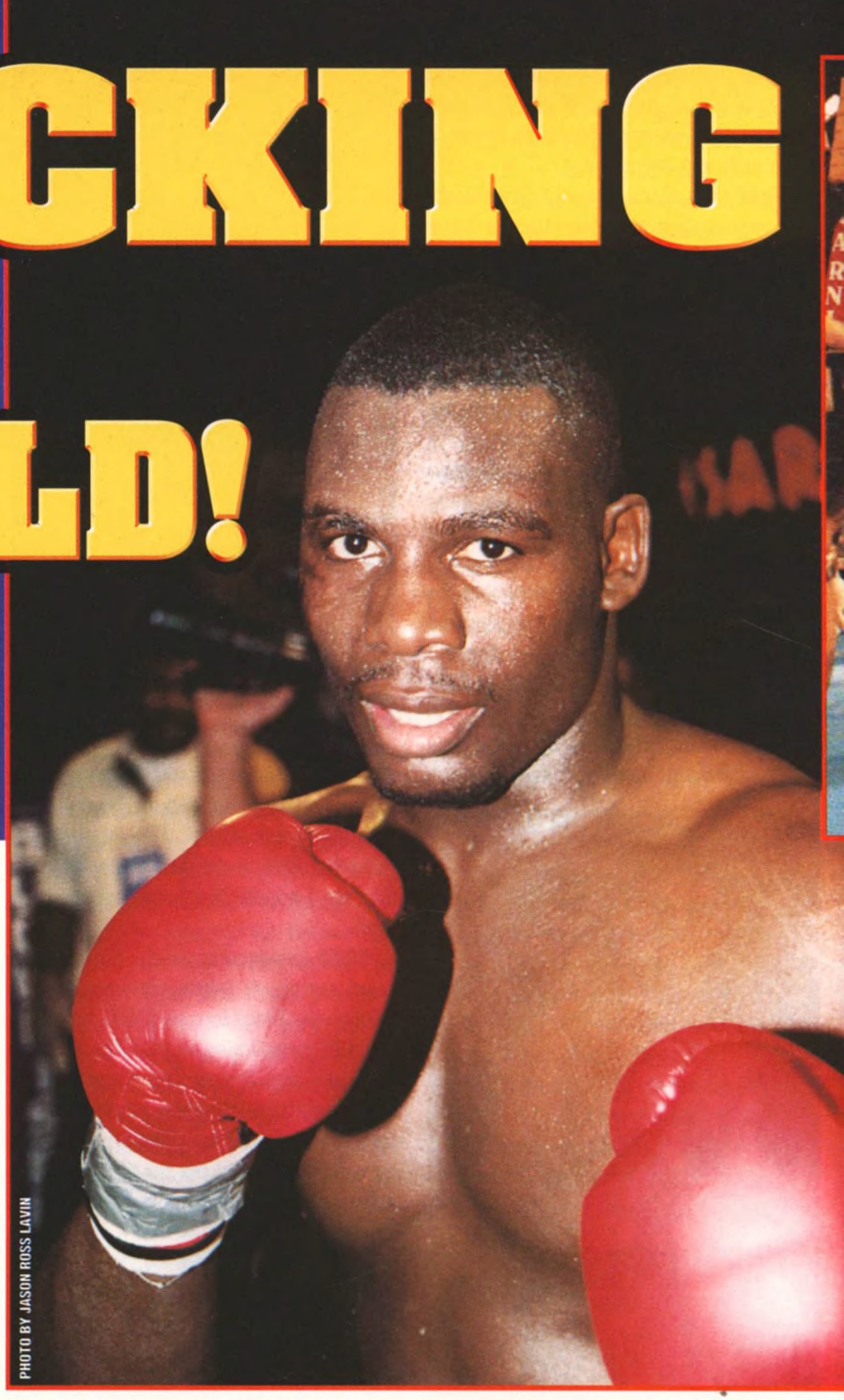


PHOTO BY JASON ROSS LAVIN

You've heard this all before, but it's worth repeating in light of recent developments: Never take an opponent for granted, take it one fight at a time, and any man over 200 pounds has a chance to knock you out.

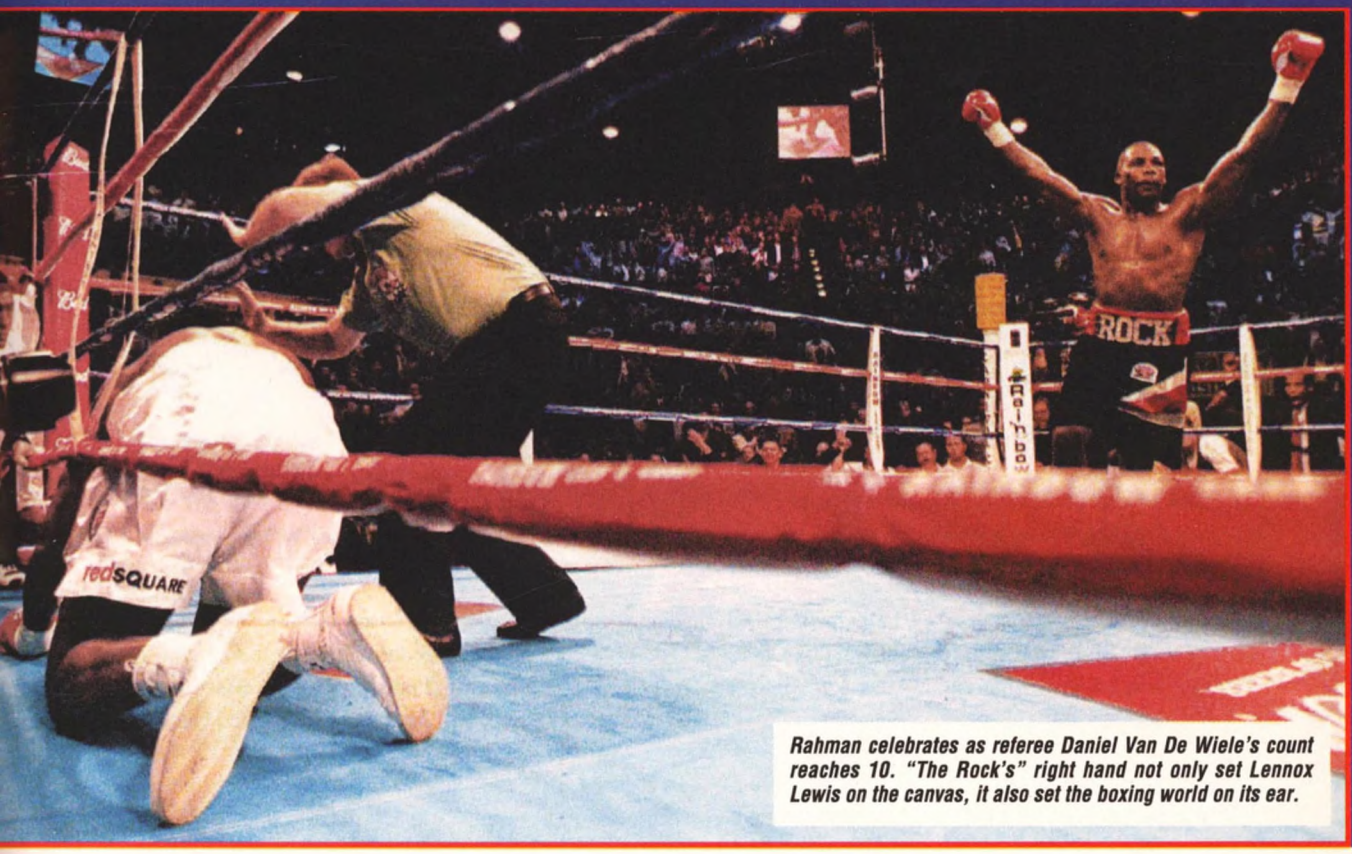
Well, if that man is Peter McNeeley—who is the only fighter in history to be knocked goofy by Mike Tyson, Butterbean, and a slice of pizza—maybe you can afford to cheat a little by hob-nobbing with Hollywood stars and filming a movie. But that wouldn't be a wise choice if your opponent is a live underdog. If he had won 34 of 36 fights, 28 by knockout, against relatively credible opposition. If you knew that opponent was in South Africa a month before the fight getting acclimated to the almost 6,000-foot altitude and the six-hour time difference. If you knew your opponent, who was railroaded from getting a title shot two years earlier, would be hungrier than ever knowing this probably would be his only chance at glory.

If that opponent was 6'2½", 237-pound stumbling block Hasim "The Rock" Rahman.

The supposedly wise and crafty Lennox Lewis made such a gross miscalculation, and he'll pay for it dearly in the history books and with his pocketbook, having squandered a possible mega-million dollar showdown with Mike Tyson.

Although it may have seemed improbable to some that the 6'5" Englishman could lose to Rahman even if he was half-cocked, those Lewis believers should've gotten edgy every time Rahman scored with a jab because it drew him closer to his target. He repeatedly hit Lewis to the belly, and then moved it upstairs and matched his foe on even terms, landing 85 total punches to Lewis' 86 in the five rounds, despite being 2½ inches shorter than the master boxer.

Lewis was plodding forward with his hands waist high and mouth open, gasping for air, and showed the same arrogance that Tyson did 11 years earlier in Tokyo. Like Tyson after his eighth-round knockdown of Buster Douglas that night, Lewis became even more overconfident when a wounded Rahman kept retreating and fiddling with his cut left eye. But he walked



Rahman celebrates as referee Daniel Van De Wiele's count reaches 10. "The Rock's" right hand not only set Lennox Lewis on the canvas, it also set the boxing world on its ear.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/ALLSPORT

into a pair of life-changing right hands. The first one elicited a smirk from Lewis, and about 30 seconds later—as Lewis nonchalantly retreated from the on-rushing Rahman—a second one exploded on his jaw. The champion crashed to the canvas like a wino after a fifth of vodka.

And just like that, the course of history was changed forever. This is what Rahman's monumental upset of Lewis means ...

To The Heavyweight Division

Want a question for *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* that no one could possibly answer—not even a boxing enthusiast? Try this one: Can you name 10 solid, legitimate top heavyweights?

After you get past the obvious—Rahman, Tyson, Lewis, David Tua, maybe Wladimir Klitschko—what do you have? There certainly are some decent fighters, some who may eventually move into that elite group, but it's hardly a who's who. John Ruiz has the WBA belt, which is about as credible as the WBO's these days, but he'd be a big underdog against any of the aforementioned five. And there's the man Ruiz conquered, Evander Holyfield, who is as shot and delusional as he is rich.

This division is stockpiled with mediocre talent and overhyped big men who may be exciting to watch but are hardly talented enough to endure a sustained title reign. Actually, this is almost reminiscent of the mid-'80s, before Tyson arrived to take out the trash and unify all the belts.

HBO and Showtime were so desperate to find the next heavyweight champion that they chose style over substance. They went ballistic over Derrick Jefferson because of his devastating knockout of Maurice Harris. What was overlooked, however, was that Jefferson was knocked down and on the verge of being knocked out by a small, relatively light-hitting heavyweight in Harris before scoring with his Hail Mary left hook.

Cliff Etienne? The few times he was hit cleanly in steamrolling Lamon Brewster and Cliff Couser, he was noticeably wobbly. Showtime nevertheless scrambled to sign him, and in his first fight with the network he was knocked down seven times and beaten by the ordinary Fres Oquendo.

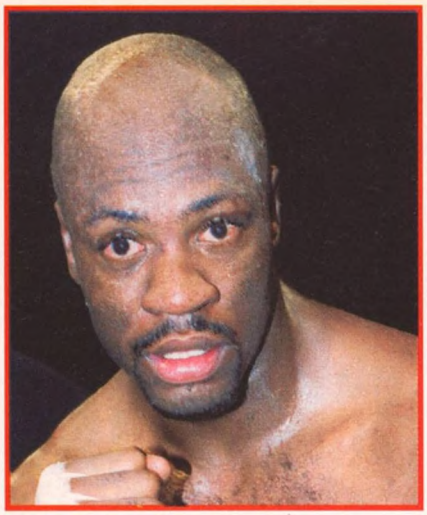
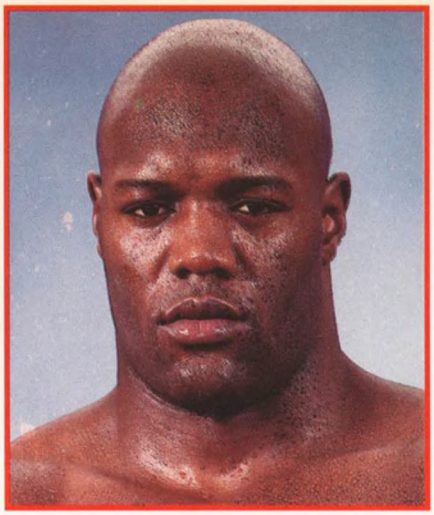
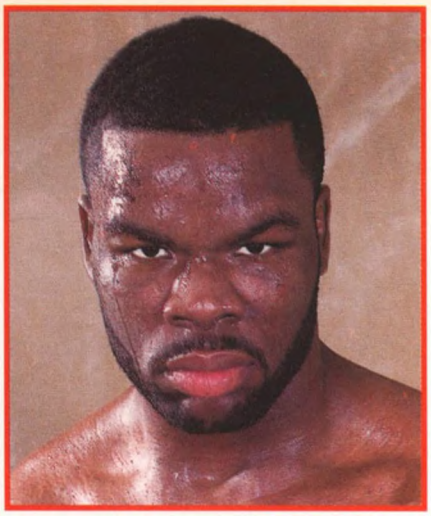
Michael Grant? He was billed as the future of boxing by HBO, until he was splattered by Lewis. The seeds of his demise, however, were there when he fought Ahmad Abdin, a journeyman who connected on the 6'7" Grant with more than 50 percent of his punches—mostly right hands. Like Lewis, Grant likes to hold his left hand low, and it cost him when he faced a legitimate puncher.

Rahman is probably no more a savior than any of the aforementioned busts, but that, in a way, makes him a savior, at least temporarily. Lewis was thought to be miles ahead of the pack, but now supremacy in the heavyweight division is up for grabs. The division didn't really get any deeper when The Rock laid Lewis out, but it sure got more interesting.

To The Business Of Boxing

The balance of power has been disrupted now that HBO probably has lost control of the championship, and the brass at the network must've had a collective coronary when Lewis went crumbling in Johannesburg. Although the network claims there's a rematch clause, Rahman is a free agent, and that means Lewis doesn't have to be his next opponent.

"All the contract says is that we have to fight Lewis within 150 days of April

As an indication of how mediocre today's heavyweight division is, remember that Derrick Jefferson, Clifford Etienne, and Michael Grant were all hyped up as possible saviors. Regardless of how long he stays on top, Rahman's win over Lewis certainly renewed interest in heavyweight boxing to a degree.

22. There are no options, no clauses," said Rahman's co-manager Stan Hoffman. "If we talk to Showtime and they want to pay us many millions more than HBO, you think we'll wait for Lewis? No way. We'll go for Tyson. HBO could've signed us before this ... but business is business."

Rahman probably would make about half as much fighting Lewis in a rematch as he would taking on Tyson. If Rahman loses to Tyson, Showtime will control the championship. The network already has Ruiz, the other titlist, for Tyson to unify the belts, and Holyfield, a logical option for a trilogy. Tyson-Tua could certainly draw some interest. Then there would be Etienne and Oquendo to keep Tyson busy.

HBO's only hope is to get Lewis to take the short end of the money, in the neighborhood of $1-million, in order to offer Rahman about $10-million to fight their man next. Maybe, believing since he's already beaten Lewis he can do it again, Rahman will take the bait, and if he wins, a fight with Tyson would be bigger and even more lucrative.

Regardless of how this plays out, having a personable American ruling boxing's glamour division is probably better for business than having a tea-sipping Brit on the throne. And if the ever-fascinating Tyson becomes champ again, who knows, the sport might just find its way back into the mainstream.

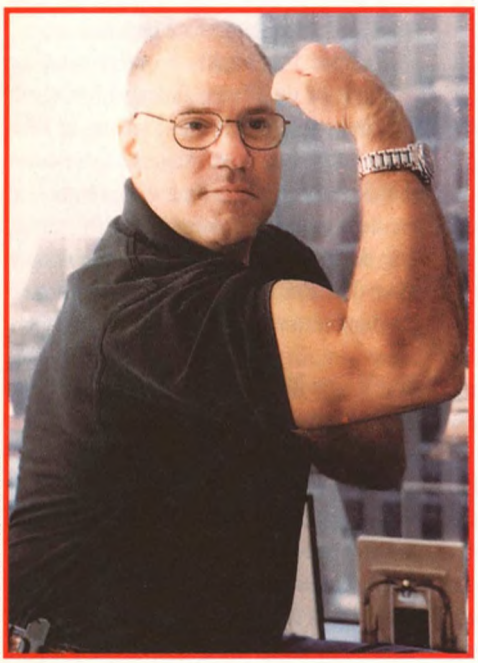


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Showtime's Jay Larkin could suddenly be in a position of power. A fight between Mike Tyson and Rahman would be televised by his network's pay-per-view arm, and if Tyson wins, Showtime would control all the major belts at heavyweight.

To Mike Tyson

At one time, it seemed like the former champion had a better chance of reuniting with Robin Givens than regaining the heavyweight title. Now, he'd probably be the favorite if he were to face Rahman.

Only a week before Rahman pulled off this upset, it was announced that Tyson would sharpen his skills on human punching bag David Izon in June. However, manager Shelly Finkel has made it clear that Izon will be scratched if they can come to terms with the new champion.

If Tyson reclaims the throne, it would force those of us who wrote him off to re-evaluate his place in history. Or would it?

Since returning six years ago from prison, Tyson has been moved carefully, and of course failed when he faced a live opponent in Evander Holyfield. Frans Botha made Tyson look amateurish until one punch bailed him out. Orlin Norris, Julius Francis, and Lou Savarese stood as much of a chance of beating Tyson as Larry, Curly, or Moe. Andrew Golota, to the surprise of no one, showed the composure of your average schizophrenic.

An emphatic victory over Rahman is a possibility and a preferred route to take than Lewis. Stylistically, the big Brit would pose more problems for the 5'11" Tyson, who hasn't shown the jab, the patience, or the head movement to navigate his way inside.

Considering that Tyson has had little ring work—11 rounds in his past five fights—not tuning up on Izon could backfire. Rahman has a steady jab, the key punch needed to neutralize Tyson, though it's debatable whether his chin will hold up long enough for it to matter. On the other hand, the same was said of Rahman prior to the Lewis fight, but he took his chin out of the equation by not allowing Lewis to hit him flush. And considering the size of the upset he sprang in Johannesburg, it would be foolish to underestimate the new champion.

Still, Tyson could regain the linear title 13 years after first achieving the feat, and while that will bring him the satisfaction he has longed for, it won't be because of

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

If Tyson lands a right hand like this against Rahman, he might just become the third three-time heavyweight champ in boxing history. Tyson may ultimately benefit more than anyone from Rahman's upset of Lewis.

merit. It will be because the other top heavyweights gradually eliminated each other, because of careful matchmaking, and because the division is about as stable as a dot-com company.

To Hasim Rahman

At one time, this Baltimore, Maryland, native was considered a rising contender, even after his controversial loss to David Tua. But it was a crushing knockout at the hands of Oleg Maskaev that relegated him to the verge of also-ran status.

Rahman initially balked at fighting in South Africa for $1.5-million and a shot at the title, but common sense kicked in: He wasn't a mandatory challenger, he was in no position to dictate terms, and if he didn't seize this one chance it may have never come his way again.

When he pulled off the unthinkable, Rahman must've felt a long way from that December '98 night in Miami when his career hit a wall. He thoroughly outboxed Tua, supposedly the best young heavyweight out there, until an illegal punch after the bell ending the ninth round changed everything. Afterward, Rahman couldn't mask his sorrow. As he dressed himself slowly in his closely guarded dressing room trailer behind Miccosukee Indian Gaming, all he could do was nod his head and repeat, "I can't believe they took this away from me."

Tua wasn't penalized for his late punch, Rahman wasn't granted additional time to recover, and the fight ended early in the 10th round with Rahman on his feet, ducking most of Tua's powerpunches. Tua went on to sit on the number-one IBF ranking he earned with that dubious victory, refused to give Rahman a rematch, and feasted on patsies, bums, and buffets until he got his shot at Lewis last year. He lost convincingly.

So maybe it's karmic justice that Rahman is champion now and Tua is not. While Rahman is a beatable champion whose skills are ordinary in many ways, it really doesn't matter. Whether he goes down as one of the shortest-lived heavy-

(Continued on page 44)

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Rahman's highly controversial stoppage loss to David Tua is now a distant memory. Rahman said it was poetic justice that he got the next shot at Lewis after Tua failed, and he made much more of his chance than the Samoan did.

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Hasim Rahman

(Continued from page 43)

weight champions in history or enjoys a lengthy reign, unlike Lewis, who was handed a vacated WBC title on two occasions, Rahman unquestionably earned his title. He deserves all the spoils that will come his way, and if he meets Tyson as expected, there will be about 15 million reasons to show it was all worth it.

To Lennox Lewis

For someone with more than 100 amateur fights and an Olympic gold medal, and 14 previous world title fights, this avid chess player should've known better. But success can breed complacency, and it was only fitting that Lewis was on all fours at the end, because he dogged it every step of the way. If he weighed a career-high 253 pounds for Rahman, Lewis' ego must've accounted for 250 of it.

Sure, it happened to Tyson when he was upended by Douglas, but this one was different. Tyson took a beating for 10 rounds before succumbing to Douglas' sustained, two-fisted assault. Lewis was knocked out by one punch. This after being elevated to all-time great status by some, even ranked as high as number two by some short-sighted observers in the British press, ahead of Joe Louis. How many times did "The Brown Bomber," though he was knocked down 10 times in his career, get stretched by one punch? What about Muhammad Ali, who never took a 10-count in his career, or Larry Holmes, who didn't until he was on his rocking chair, or Rocky Marciano?

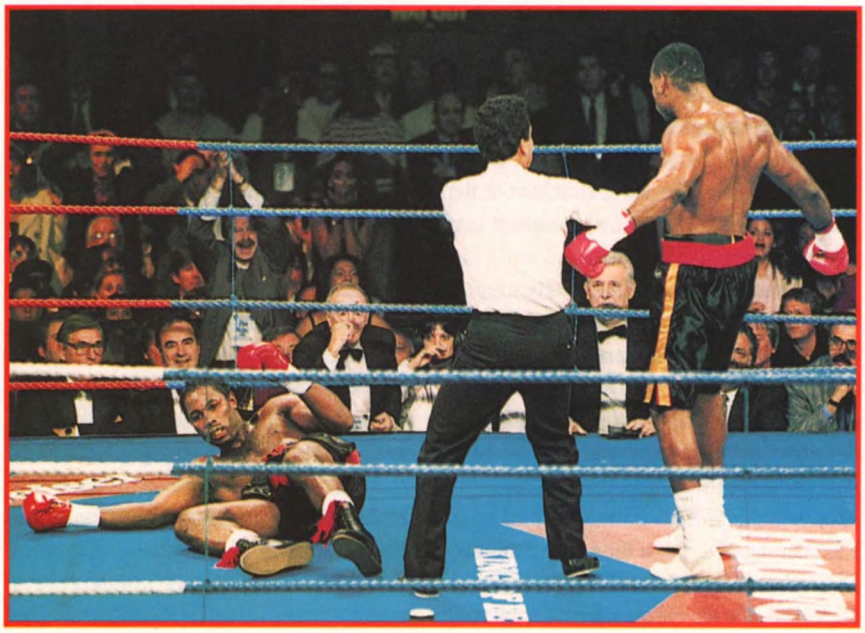
It was tantamount to sacrilege to mention Lewis—who was also knocked out by one punch from Oliver McCall in 1994—among that pantheon of greats even before the Rahman fight, and to do so now should be punishable by being forced to watch Lewis' hug-a-thon with Henry Akinwande.

Most of Lewis' performances have resembled a country-and-western line dance: one-two, clinch, one-two, clinch. Now spin your partner around, and one-two clinch.

Look back at some of his biggest wins as a professional. We knew Tua was a limited, one-dimensional puncher long before Lewis disarmed him. Tommy Morrison already had been exposed several times over. The rematch with McCall and his waltzes with Zeljko Mavrovic and Akinwande proved nothing. Shannon Briggs? Sure, Briggs looked the part of a worthy heavyweight champion, but then again, so did Lewis.

Checkmate. ■

Johnnie Whitehead is an editor for USA Today and a regular contributor to this magazine.



Maybe it wasn't such a fluke after all: Lewis' loss to Rahman wasn't too different from his 1994 loss to Oliver McCall. Lewis' place in history is up in the air following the second defeat of his career.

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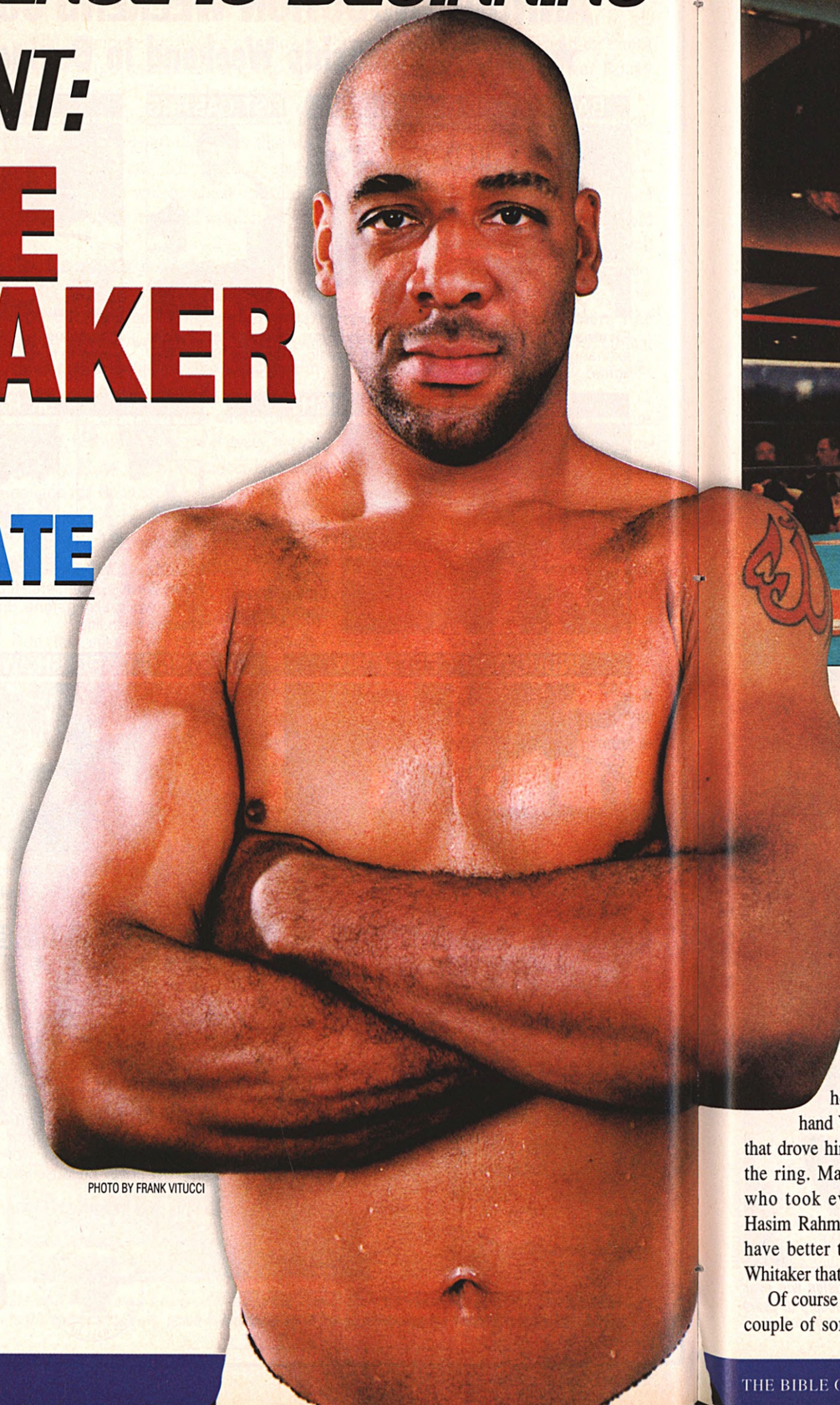


PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

By William Dettloff

The punches didn't look like much. A straight right hand off the ropes, a couple of soft-looking jabs, thrown southpaw no less. An uppercut, a lazy cross. The guy pitching them looked like he had strolled into the gym for a light workout maybe 10 minutes earlier and was shadowboxing, just loosening up. You'd have thought his hands weren't even wrapped yet. That's how casual he was. And yet, big, brawny, and top-rated Oleg Maskaev, who was on the receiving end of those half-hearted swats, was splayed out on the mat, a million miles away and 10 clicks from being counted out. Lance Whitaker smiled a little and walked his 260 pounds over to a corner and waited calmly for referee Jay Nady to finish counting. He did.

The excuse came from the press first, and then from the fighter himself, that maybe Maskaev shouldn't have rushed into another big fight right after getting a surprise shellacking from Kirk Johnson last time out. He should have retreated back to whence he came, back into the safety of Cedric Kushner's *Heavyweight Explosion* cards. Or, better yet, a couple of *Thunderbox* stints. Maybe that would have helped. Maybe he'd have seen the first right hand Whitaker laid on him, the one that drove him, stumbling, halfway across the ring. Maybe this big, strapping guy who took everything the hard-hitting Hasim Rahman could throw at him could have better taken the combination from Whitaker that put him flat on his back.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Referee Jay Nady signals the end of the fight as Oleg Maskaev tries unsuccessfully to beat the 10-count. The combination Whitaker used to flatten Maskaev didn't look like much, an indication of the pure, effortless power the 6'8" contender possesses.

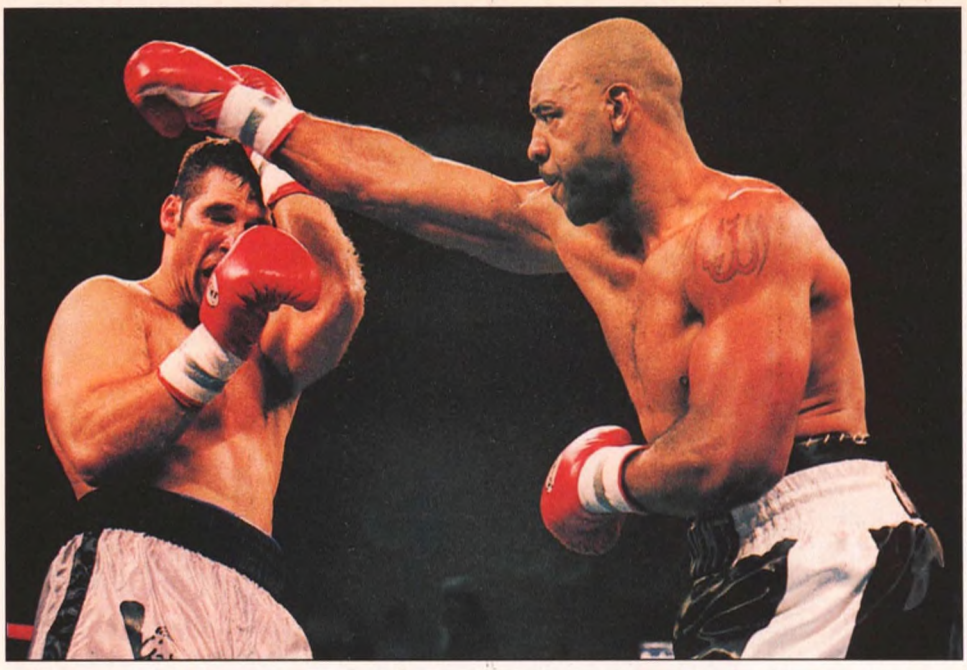
Of course Maskaev should have taken a couple of softies after the Johnson fight. There's a reason guys do that. But it was only Whitaker. They could get past him. Whitaker was just a big lug who clubbed with his punches, who couldn't move, who dropped a decision to Lou Savarese a couple of years ago. What could be the harm? Criminy, the guy doesn't even pivot with his punches. He throws them like he doesn't even care. How hard could he hit, a big guy who swats like that?

Maskaev found out.

"My brother Joe has been telling me for years that Lance is almost Foreman-esque, and he finally showed it," a giddy Dan Goossen told THE RING. Goossen is president of America Presents, Whitaker's promoter. He was referring to George Foreman's habit, as a young fighter, of flattening sturdy men with glancing blows, or blows thrown apparently in a half-hearted way. "And this guy is so big and so strong that he's almost as tough defensively as he is offensively. He deflects so many punches with his arms just because they're so huge."

Lots of guys have great big arms and can't hit even a little. There are lots of body beautifuls and giants, great big behemoths like Whitaker, who can't fight a lick. If you ask some fight guys, Whitaker is one of them. Or, he used to be. That had to be why Maskaev and his stewards agreed to face him right after the Johnson loss. They had seen him, but maybe they just watched tape of the Savarese fight from two years ago, which was Whitaker's 19th pro fight, and his first against a guy ranked in the top 20. Maybe they saw the same thing in those tapes that Whitaker saw.

"I wasn't really sure of myself that night," Whitaker said a couple of weeks after doing in Maskaev. "I thought, *Man, he went the distance with George Foreman, he knocked out Buster Douglas.* It was my first big fight on HBO. So I was



Whitaker learned a great deal from the lone defeat of his career, a March '99 split-decision loss to Lou Savarese. Whitaker had doubts about himself going into that fight, but he nearly kayoed Savarese in the sixth round and has fought with much more confidence ever since.

tight. I didn't have confidence. I laid on the ropes too much. I never really took charge, I let him take charge, and I never really backed him up. Still, I had him down and almost out."

Whitaker remembers that he had Savarese down in the sixth and that referee Steve Smoger gave him what looked to a lot of people like an awfully generous count. Savarese rose from the knockdown and went on to outhustle Whitaker down the stretch, but Whitaker talks like a man thankful for lessons learned the hard way.

"Savarese opened my eyes up a little," he said. "Even though I lost the decision, my confidence went up from there and I started training harder after that fight. I started working more on throwing combinations. I got better."

Most would call that an understatement. The difference between the guy who lost to Savarese and the one who flattened Maskaev is considerable. Two fights in between—a decision win over the then-undefeated Monte Barrett and a second-round stoppage of Robert Davis—demonstrated, in the eyes of most, steady improvement that continued in the Maskaev fight. The Savarese loss was a turning point, Whitaker, 23-1 (19), says. Joe Goossen, Whitaker's trainer since the day he turned pro in 1996, agrees.

"Just like a tough fight can ruin you, it can also make you a better fighter," Goossen said. "In the case of the Savarese fight, it was more of a learning experience. I thought he stopped him and the fight should have been over in the sixth round, but aside from that, I thought he gained 10 fights worth of experience in that one fight. And in every fight since, he's been finding himself more and more, as a fighter."

Brother Dan offers another theory: "Lance realized that he allowed a fight to get away from him that he should have won easily. Sometimes when a fighter loses, it's a blessing in disguise. They have to make a decision. Lance did, and realized Savarese should have been a one- or two-round fight for him."

Maybe the Savarese fight turned everything around for Whitaker. Maybe all the work he started putting in at the gym after it did. Goossen calls him one of the most dedicated fighters he's ever seen. But there may be another reason, one not so storybook and predictable. Personal tragedy affects people in myriad ways and it affects fighters, too. Last November, the 28-year-old Whitaker found out that his six-year-old son, Lance Jr., had leukemia.

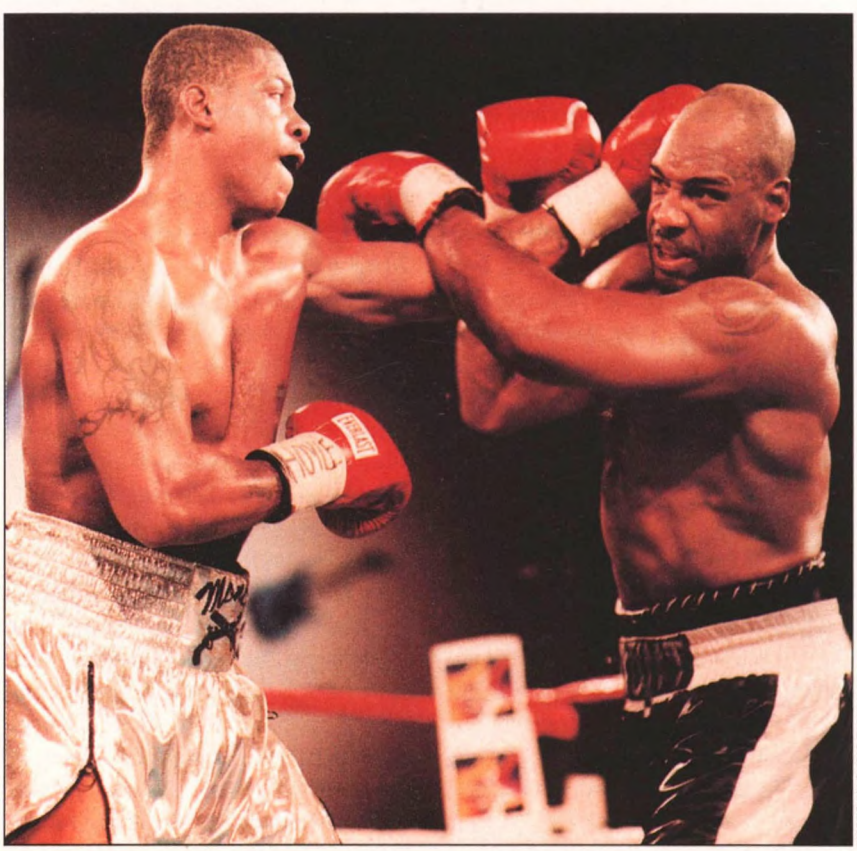


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

In his first fight after the Savarese loss, Whitaker bounced back with a close decision win over then-unbeaten Monte Barrett. The gradual improvement in each fight over the past couple of years has turned "Mount" into a legitimate top-10 contender to Lennox Lewis' heavyweight title.

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Early in his career, Whitaker fought the typical stiffs, such as out-of-shape trialhorse Garing Lane. The California behemoth won his first 18 fights, including 16 by knockout.

By his own admission, the man called "Mount," the guy who looks like he could carry the weight of several continents on his shoulders, wept and wept and held his son like only a man who already knows true tragedy could.

What followed? Long nights spent in Lance Jr.'s hospital room, and the mounting of medical bills his privately bought insurance couldn't pay. He moved into the hospital to be near him, and for three months, all he did was hold his son and tell him how much he loved him. The boy handled chemotherapy well, if there is such a thing, and the cancer was held at bay.

At this writing, Lance Jr. is doing well. "He's off the chemo and looking healthy and strong," Whitaker said.

But it's hard for a man to be the same after that. It's hard for him to take things for granted. If Lance Jr. recovers fully and lives 100 years, Lance Sr. still will never be the same man that he was before. Anguish and desperation change a man. But sometimes they make him a better fighter, and Whitaker wouldn't be the first guy to improve as a fighter because of personal hardship. If you want proof, go watch the tape again of Buster Douglas kicking Mike Tyson's butt all over the ring, and remember that Douglas' mother, to whom he was exceedingly close, died not long before. The most dangerous fighters are those who have nothing to lose because they've already lost everything. A fight then is just that: a fight.

"I think what happens in these situations is that reality sets in and gives people the advantage of realizing what's real and what's make-believe," Dan Goossen said. "And once people realize what reality is, it gives them the vision to choose the right paths and to realize that you have one shot and you've got to take advantage of it."

Even if the trauma Whitaker has experienced with his son has made him a better fighter, it's not like he didn't have his share of heartache already. He spent five years, from the age of 13 to 18, in a boys home after his father abandoned him.

"It taught me a lot of responsibility," he said of his stay there, and he's thankful for the people there who cared about him. "The basketball coaches there took a liking to me and they steered me in the right direction. It was hard growing up in a boys home, but I worked through it. It made a man out of me."

Whitaker played high school sports, basketball and football mostly, and he liked game day itself, but never the practicing. Then one day while he was on line at a burger joint, a man who turned out to

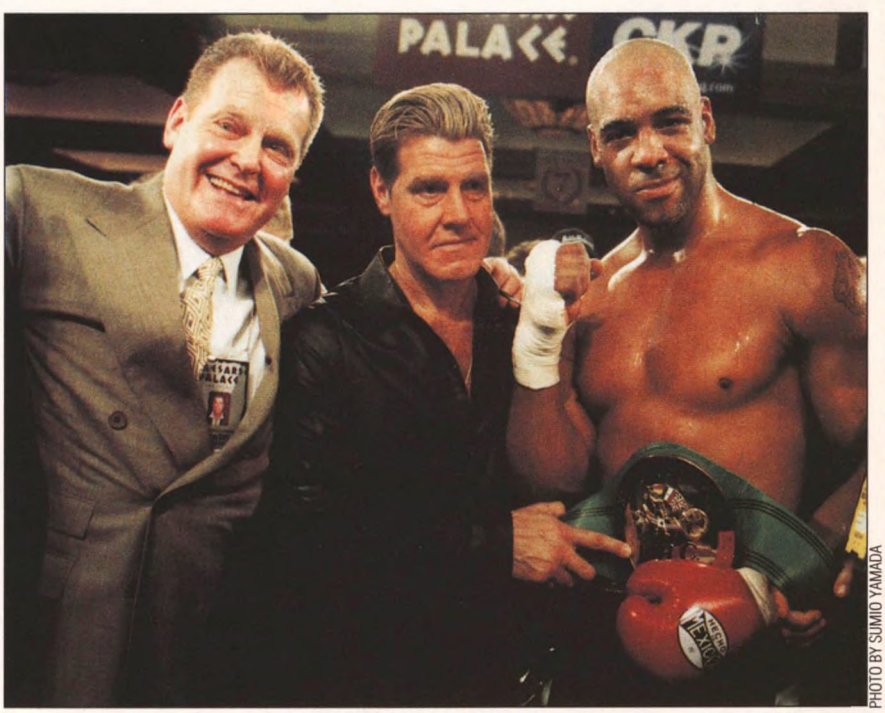


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Dan and Joe Goossen, Whitaker's promoter and trainer, respectively, both believe their man is ready for anyone at heavyweight. That includes Mike Tyson, who Joe promises would be seriously harmed if he stepped into the ring with Whitaker.

be Los Angeles trainer Francisco Ortega tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Hey kid, how would you like to make a million dollars?" Of course he'd like it, and before long he was a national amateur champion who was being courted by the Duvas until he failed in a bid to make the 1996 Olympic team.

Even though he was a successful amateur, things didn't get much easier for Whitaker, a 6'8", 280-pound kid. Financially, it was rough. For a while, when he was a top amateur, Whitaker lived in an old, beat-up Toyota Celica he owned. He kept his clothes in there and slept in there and parked it in front of a buddy's house so he could use the shower on occasion. Less desperate times than those have turned thousands of young men into thugs, criminals, and worse. Not Whitaker.

"I just never got into that whole thing, robbing, stealing," he said. "I knew it wasn't for me. It was tough growing up the way I did, but it taught me responsibility. And that's why I want to be a role model for my son. I would never want him to grow up the way I did, in a boys home; I want him to be a responsible man someday."

Whitaker figures it will be even easier to be the role model he wants to be if he's the heavyweight champion of the world someday. It's a possibility with which he's only recently become comfortable.

"I didn't always know it, but now I do, that I can stay right there with the best heavyweights in the world, any one of them," he said. "I'd like to fight Lennox Lewis in the ring right now."

Good luck. In a curious speech made to HBO viewers following Whitaker's demolition of Maskaev, Lewis said he was ready to take on all comers. Then, in his very next breath, he said Whitaker really isn't on his list of possible opponents. Go figure. But it's okay with Joe Goossen. He has another opponent in mind.

"I would take a Mike Tyson fight against Lance in a heartbeat," the trainer revealed. "Lance would hit him on the top of the head and break his ankles. Tyson is 5'10". My guy is 6'8". And I promise you this: There would be no problems with the money; we'd be glad to take short dough. There would be no problems with the promoters, because they're both under the same promoter. I'd even do a winner-take-all against Tyson. I'll go on record saying this: I guarantee that if Lance and Mike fight, Tyson will be carried out, and I don't mean on someone's shoulders.

"Do you hear anyone calling out Tyson? Hell no. Nobody's calling him out. None of the contenders that are out there are calling out Tyson. Guess what? We're calling out Mike Tyson."

Whitaker, a humble guy to the end, laughed at his trainer's assertions and said sure he'd fight Mike. He wasn't even a fight fan when Tyson was at his best, can't remember seeing him fight more than once or twice when "Iron Mike" was in his glory days. So he has nothing to fear. Maybe he has nothing to fear against any top heavyweight. Maybe he knows, finally, where he stands. More importantly, maybe he knows how far he's come. ■

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David Tua KO 6 Danell Nicholson
Fres Oquendo KO 8 Clifford Etienne
Frans Botha KO 1 Joey Guy
James Toney KO 2 Saul Montana
Tim Witherspoon W 10 Eliecer Castillo
Ray Mercer KO 5 Don Steele
Terrance Lewis KO 9 Ed Mahone
Lawrence Clay-Bey KO 5 Ken Murphy
Henry Akinwande KO 2 Peter McNeeley
Luan Krasniqi KO 1 Rocky Ray Phillips
Shannon Briggs KO 1 Russell Chasteen
Obed Sullivan KO 4 Augustin Corpus
Julius Francis W 12 Michael Holden
China Smith W 12 Derrell Dixon
Wolfgramm Tech. Win 7 Jimmy Thunder
Cliff Couser W 10 A.J. Moore
Robert Daniels KO 6 Frankie Hines
Sedreck Fields KO 6 Onebo Maxime
Faruq Saleem W 10 Abdul Muhaymin
Timo Hoffman W 8 Michael Sprott
Peter Okhello W 12 Tone Fiso
Ricky Womack KO 3 Curt Paige
Arthur Cook KO 9 Albert Sosnowski
Tye Fields KO 2 Jason Nicholson
Malik Scott W 4 Maurice Wheeler
Paolo Vidoz W 4 Marcus Johnson
Calvin Brock KO 2 Jeff Ford
Calvin Brock W 4 Antonio Colbert
Michael Bennett KO 1 Selim Wadena
Michael Bennett KO 1 Billy Zumbrun

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Vassiliy Jirov KO 1 Terry McGroom
(Retains IBF Title)
Jean Marc Mormeck KO 3 Valery Vikhor
Vincenzo Cantatore KO 5 Alain Simon
Crawford Ashley W 8 Lee Swaby
Rudiger May W 8 Henri Mobio Besse
Jesper Kristiansen W 6 Jim Murray

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Julio Gonzalez KO 5 Konstantin Semerdjiev
Clinton Woods KO 10 Ali Forbes
Julian Letterlough W 6 Dennis McKinney
Yawe Davis KO 3 Neil Simpson
Paul Briggs KO 2 Sam Leuii
Troy Weaver KO 4 Reggie Roberts
Robert Koon W 10 Lee Fortune
Mario Tonus W 10 Pino Ferrazzo
Alejandro Lakatus KO 4 Roberto Dominguez
Randy Griffin KO 2 Ronald Boddie

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Sven Ottke KO 8 James Crawford
(Retains IBF Title)
James Butler W 10 Jerry Lee Williams
Omar Sheika KO 2 Stephane Ouellet
David Starie KO 3 Andy Flute

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Oscar Larios fires a right at John Lowey

Ramon Britez KO 5 Adrian Dodson
Yoshinori Nishizawa D 12 Heath Stenton
Jurgen Brahmer KO 5 Juan Carlos Viloria
Matthew Barney KO 1 Matt Mowatt
Anthony Bonsante W 8 Bill Mastrangelo
Jerson Ravelo W 4 Enroy Tony
Jerson Ravelo KO 2 Tommy Barker

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

David Reid W 10 Urbano Gurrola
Erland Betare W 10 Anthony Ivory
Rudy Lovato W 10 Shelby Pudwill
Lloyd Weaver KO 1 Cebian St. Pierre
Cleveland Corder W 8 Ron Pasek
Jermain Taylor KO 2 Kenny Stubbs

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Steve Roberts KO 2 Keith Mullings
Cory Spinks Tech. Win 4
Leonard Townsend
Mamadou Thiam KO 1 Barhi Ahmeti
Adrian Stone W 12 Joe Townsley
Antonio Margarito KO 1 Robert West
Anthony Farnell KO 2 Shakir Ashanti
Angel Hernandez KO 4 Anthony Jones
Mikael Rask W 12 Gary Murray
Kelly Pavlik KO 1 Tommy Walker
Stephen Pryor KO 1 Chris Petterson

WELTERWEIGHTS

Oscar De La Hoya KO 5 Arturo Gatti
Rafael Pineda KO 6 Oba Carr
Golden Johnson KO 6 Bobby Heath
Junior Witter KO 2 David Kirk
Edwin Cassiani KO 4 Norberto Sandoval
Curtis Barker KO 4 Luther Smith
Teruo Nagase W 10 Yoshiro Nakano
Mahamad Abdullaev W 4
Mahan Washington

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Ben Tackie KO 6 Terrell Finger
Billy Schwer W 12 Newton Villarreal
Eamonn Magee KO 5 Alan Bosworth
Ricky Hatton KO 4 Tony Pep
DeMarcus Corley W 12 Dillon Carew
Michael Stewart KO 1 Andre Cray
Stephen Carr KO 4 Charles Owiso
Antonio Pitalua KO 6 Mauro Lucero
Manuel Rodrigues KO 6 Michael Warrick
Hiroyuki Maeda KO 1 Shigeyuki Ohno
Karim Bouali KO 8 Franck Benoni
Steve Quinonez W 6 Juan Pollo Valenzuela
Ebo Elder KO 8 Andre Baker
Fred Cadena KO 2 Arthur Medina
Juan Garza KO 3 Rene Cantu
Andre Eason W 6 Juan Cruz
Miguel Cotto KO 2 Jacob Godinez
Ricardo Williams Jr. KO 4 Joey Bullock

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Olympian Jose Navarro cracks Antonio Perez

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Angel Manfredy W 10 Juan Angel Macias
Lakva Sim W 10 Sungho Yuh
Efren Hinojosa W 12 Lamar Murphy
Leavander Johnson KO 8 Ray Minus
Arnulfo Castillo Tech. Draw 4
Jose Luis Juarez
Bruno Wartelle W 8 Rodolpho Lundsford
Lovemore Ndou KO 5 Carlos Uribe
Aldo Rios W 10 Ricardo Silva
Raul Balbi KO 10 Alberto Sicurella
Sandro Casamonica W 6 Kimoun Kouassi
Martin O'Malley W 8 Luis Lizarraga
Alex Arthur KO 2 Woody Greenway

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Juan Manuel Marquez KO 2 Baby Lorona
Alex Moon W 12 Charles Shepherd
Carl Greaves KO 6 Nigel Senior
Pedro Miranda KO 1 Andile Nyumka
Kazunori Fujita W 12 Dickas Rollies
Mia St. John KO 3 Amy Yerkes

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Frankie Toledo W 12 Mbulelo Botile
(Wins IBF Title)
Marco Antonio Barrera W 12
Naseem Hamed
Johnny Tapia KO 6 Cuauhtemoc Gomez
Robbie Peden Tech. Win 9
Hector Velazquez
Scott Harrison KO 4 Richie Wenton
Fernando Velardez KO 6
Juan Carlos Ramirez
Cesar Soto D 10 Edgar Barcenas
Lewis Wood KO 6 Jerry Cooper
Raymundo Beltran KO 3
Francisco Rodriguez

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Bones Adams W 12 Ivan Alvarez
(Retains WBA Title)
Oscar Larios W 10 John Lowey
Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym W 12
Edison Valencia

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Paulie Ayala W 12 Hugo Dianzo
(Retains WBA Title)
Cruz Carbajal KO 6 Alejandro Estrada
Clarence Vinson W 4 Bryan Garcia

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Martin Castillo KO 1 Francisco Tejedor
Mbwana Matumla KO 7 Joel Avila
Carlos Madrigal KO 1 Pedro Pena
Hayato Asai KO 1 Yodpetch Chuwatana
Jose Navarro W 6 Antonio Perez

FLYWEIGHTS

Fernando Montiel KO 7 Zoltan Lunka
Alexander Mahmutov W 12 Jose Bueno
Randy Mangubat KO 4 Bert Cano
Gabula Vabaza KO 11 Ncedo Cecane

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Jose Garcia W 12 Keith Knox
Wolf Tokimitsu KO 3 Puna Eminent

STRAWWEIGHTS

Kermin Guardia W 12 Juan Alfonso Keb

RINGSIDE REPORTS

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

It's not often that a guy who's unbeaten in 19 fights is brought in as the "opponent," but that was precisely the case when Fres Oquendo signed on the dotted line to take on Clifford "The Black Rhino" Etienne. Showtime had just signed The Rhino to a multimillion-dollar contract, and the hype mill was churning, peaking with a full-page story on the exciting Etienne in *Sports Illustrated*. Oquendo? He was just a foil with a glossy record.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Eight rounds and seven knockdowns later, it was Etienne who had been foiled. The lightly regarded Oquendo refused to be gored by The Rhino, and instead tamed him, knocking him down with rights to the top of the head virtually every time Etienne charged at him. Etienne was renowned for his remarkable stamina, but Oquendo wore him down to the point where an exhausted Rhino was easy pickings for "The Big O" and was stopped midway through round eight.

It wasn't the most artistic victory ever; in fact, at times Oquendo seemed merely to be the less clutzy of two clutzy heavyweights. But he rose from obscurity to thoroughly whip the heavyweight division's hottest prospect, and even if he didn't look like the second coming of Muhammad Ali, he earned Fighter of the Month honors by exposing and disposing of The Black Rhino.

• • • •

Fres Oquendo

Shane Mosley KO 5 Shannan Taylor

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Mosley cracks Taylor with a right

Las Vegas, Nevada: No less an authority than Hall of Fame trainer Eddie Futch said Mosley compared favorably to Sugar Ray Robinson. After hearing those remarks from a man considered by many to be the best trainer of all-time, Mosley went out and put on a Robinson-esque performance in demolishing Taylor at Caesars Palace.

Making his second successful defense of the WBC welterweight championship, Mosley dropped the Australian challenger with a devastating right at the end of the first round and then beat him mercilessly for each of the next four. Taylor's trainer, Jeff Fenech, had no choice but to throw in the towel after the fifth round.

"Now I know why they say Shane Mosley is the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world," Taylor said in tribute.

Taylor, 147, said prior to the fight that he was willing to die in the ring to win the title, but any tiny prayer he might have had of winning was erased when a bomb from Mosley at the end of the first round sent him into never-never land. Just after hearing the 10-second warning signalling that the end of the round was approaching, Taylor laid out a limp left hand, and Mosley, 147, Pomona, California, came over the top with a rocket-launcher overhand right to the chin. Taylor was so disoriented that, after getting up, he walked to the neutral corner where Mosley had been sent by referee Vic Drakulich (USA).

Mosley, 37-0 (34), said it wasn't even his best right hand. "It was good, but I know I've thrown better," he said. "It was a good shot, but there was still more in the tank."

He hardly needed the reserve, however. Mosley, 29, easily took apart Taylor, 28, for the next four rounds and remained calm as Taylor attempted all sorts of dirty maneuvers. He slammed Mosley into the corner pad, tried to use his head as a battering ram, and fired off an assortment of forearms and elbows. Mosley dodged all of them with aplomb, while continuing to deliver a brutal beating. Taylor was so dazed from the first round shot he wasn't aware of what he was doing.

"I don't remember the fight, honestly," Taylor, 28-1-1 (18), said. "I'm not a dirty fighter. I don't fight that way. I guess it was just heart and instinct that you saw. I have a big heart and I guess I was doing what I needed to do to survive."

There was little Mosley didn't do on this night. He jabbed well to set up his power shots—landing 46 percent of his jabs, many of which were powerful in and of themselves—and he was able to land his big shots nearly at will. He connected on an astounding 69 percent (50 of 72) of his power shots, according to CompuBox. His body work was excellent as always, especially the left to the ribs that had Taylor in obvious pain as the fifth round concluded. Mosley even had the right answer when Taylor taunted him after a combination in the first round.

"He said, 'Is that all you got?' and I said, 'It's all I got right now,'" Mosley recalled.

Much to his chagrin, Taylor learned there was plenty more on the way.

Television: HBO

Promoter: Cedric Kushner Productions

(3-10-01)

Kevin Iole

Vassiliy Jirov KO 1 Terry McGroom

Las Vegas, Nevada: McGroom had heard of Jirov's prowess at going to the body, but he clearly wasn't ready for a close-up view of the master at work. Jirov easily defended the IBF cruiserweight championship for the fourth time, stopping the veteran McGroom in less than 90 seconds with a devastating bodyshot at the MGM Grand Garden.

Jirov, 190, dug a searing left to the body that sent McGroom, 189, tumbling to the canvas. The 35-year-old from Little Rock, Arkansas, started to get up, but fell back down and was clearly in discomfort and not particularly eager to continue as referee Tony Weeks (USA) counted to 10 at the 82-second mark.

McGroom was thought to be a decent opponent, since he'd nearly beaten James Toney a year earlier. But the quick win came as no surprise to Jirov, 26, who is looking for bigger competition than can be found in the cruiserweight division.

"I expected to finish him in a couple of rounds," Jirov, 28-0 (26), said.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

McGroom collapses after a Jirov bodyshot

It was hardly a case of Jirov getting lucky with one shot. He was patient despite the quick finish and maneuvered McGroom, 19-3-2 (10), into position. He got a full turn on the hook, which took the air as well as the fight out of the overmatched challenger. In the process, Jirov earned high praise from his trainer, Eddie Futch disciple Thell Torrance.

"He's a fantastic bodypuncher," Torrance said. "He set it up pretty good. He could have gone to the head or body. He came in shape. He was prepared to go 12 rounds."

Jirov said he would be willing to fight undisputed light heavyweight champion Roy Jones, but former HBO Sports executive Lou DiBella said he doubted the cautious Jones would ever step into the ring with the powerpunching fighter from Kazakhstan. Jirov's manager, Ivaylo Gotzev, said he would not be averse to a fight with Jones, but said he would sooner advise Jirov to pursue the WBA and WBC cruiserweight belts. Jirov said he is ready for anything and everything.

"The biggest fights I can get, that's what I want right now," he said.

Promoter: Jerry Perenchio/Univision Sports

(3-24-01)

Kevin Iole

Celes Kobayashi KO 10 Leo Gamez

Tokyo, Japan: Japanese southpaw Kobayashi, 115, impressively captured the WBA super flyweight title as he whipped defending champ Gamez, a 37-year-old Venezuelan, 113¾, all the way en route to a 10th-round TKO at Yokohama Arena. A beautiful left counter dropped Gamez in the 10th, prompting referee Armando Garcia (USA) to intervene at 2:09 of the round.

Four-division champ Gamez' devastating power was recently shown when he dismantled Hideki Todaka in seven lopsided rounds to win the title, but his power never came to the fore in this fight, his first defense of that belt. Kobayashi, 27, took the initiative with his persistent body bombardment from the outset, and Gamez did little more than cover up and wait for the openings. The aggressive challenger made the Venezuelan bleed from the nostrils in the fourth, and opened a gash over the right eye with legal punches in the fifth. When Gamez occasionally attempted to fight back with heavier punches, almost all of them were blocked by Kobayashi's tight guard.

After being dominated for the first eight rounds, however, Gamez finally let loose in the ninth and surprisingly had the challenger on the defensive with his furious assault. The Venezuelan showed his lion heart and connected with strong rights to the face of Kobayashi, who was forced to use his footwork to survive the champ's wicked shots.

Gamez' aggression continued in the 10th, as he slugged away with solid rights in an effort for a come-from-behind kayo, but Kobayashi gamely retaliated with busy combinations to the face and midsection. As the combatants fiercely mixed it up toe-to-toe in the center of the ring, a counter left from Kobayashi caught the Venezuelan on the button, sinking him to the deck face-first. Gamez barely managed to stand up, and was staggering so badly that the third man didn't hesitate to declare a well-timed halt.

Through nine rounds, judge Cesar Ramos (Puerto Rico) had it 89-82, Erkki Meronen (Finland) scored it 89-83, and Minyoung Lee (Korea) saw it 88-84, all for Kobayashi, 23-4-3 (14).

"It's like a dream that I became the world champ by a knockout," the newly crowned champion jubilantly said afterward. "My corner instructed me to go and fight in the 10th. Gamez was really a hard puncher with his right hand."

Kobayashi, who in his only other world title fight failed to win the WBC fly belt in a split draw with Malcolm Tunacao last August, isn't an especially talented sharpshooter, but is a durable, well-educated, and game boxer-puncher who has certainly improved over the course of his nine years as a pro.

The crestfallen Gamez, 33-8-1 (25), complemented Kobayashi afterward, and informed the boxing world that he doesn't plan to try to win a fifth world title. "Having fought for 24 years, it's time to hang up the gloves for good," he said. "I wish to become an instructor for young boys in Venezuela."

Promoter: Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions

(3-11-01)

Joe Koizumi

Tim Austin KO 6 Jesus Perez

Las Vegas, Nevada: Though challenger Perez was awkward and caused Austin to take a little more time than normal to do his thing, he was no match for the IBF bantamweight champion from

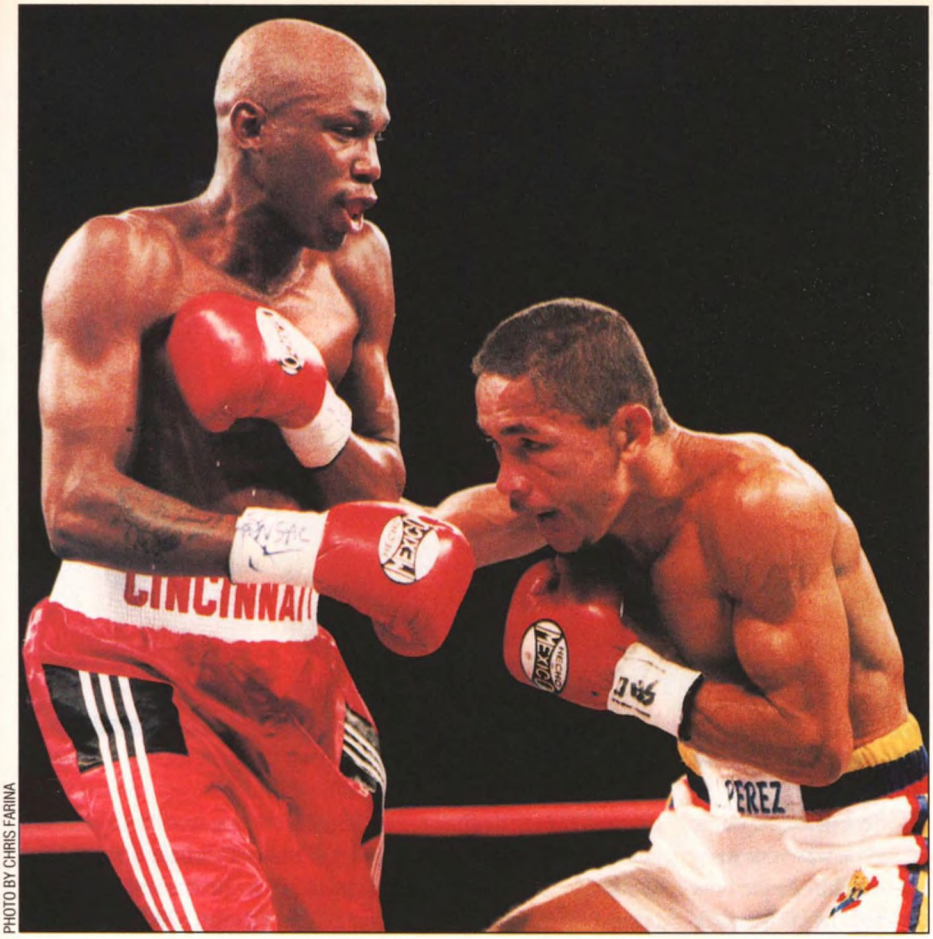

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Austin unloads on overmatched Perez

Cincinnati, Ohio. When Austin finally found his rhythm, he landed at will and forced referee Kenny Bayless (USA) to stop the bout after the second knockdown of the sixth round.

Perez was not in Austin's league as a fighter and it showed, as hard-hitting southpaw Austin put him down four times, including once in the third and once in the fifth. Perez, 20-1-2 (11), showed plenty of spunk when he charged Bayless, enraged, after the fight was halted. Had he shown that much bravado during the fight, he might have fared a bit better against the unbeaten Austin, 22-0-1 (20).

Austin, hoping to get a big fight against either Paulie Ayala, Naseem Hamed, or Johnny Tapia, had been off for seven months, but left the ring at the Mandalay Bay Events Center a satisfied man.

"He was an awkward fighter, but I kept my composure and fought patiently," Austin said after recording his sixth title defense.

Both fighters fought patiently at the start, and there were resounding choruses of boos wafting to the rafters. Austin, 117, was willing to wait for the opening he needed, while Perez, it appeared, had neither the skill nor the inclination to mix it up with the hard-punching champion. Perez, 117, Colombia, began to clown in the third round and paid for it, as Austin landed a solid straight left that put him down for the first time in the bout. The same punch put Perez down in the fifth, by which point it appeared the end was nearing.

Austin landed the best punch of the fight about a minute into the sixth, depositing Perez onto the floor a third time, again with a left. But unlike the previous knockdowns, this time Austin waded in for the finish. He landed a counter right hook, sending Perez down and causing Bayless to wave it off at 2:02 of the round. The decision enraged Perez.

"I am heartbroken and I feel as though I'm an embarrassment to all Latins," Perez said.

"After the first knockdown, I went in there and wanted to pick clean shots," Austin, 29, said. "My bodyshots hurt him. I knew I would eventually get a clean shot in, and I did."

Television: SET

Promoter: Don King Productions

(3-3-01)

Kevin Iole

Byron Mitchell KO 12 Manuel Siaca

Las Vegas, Nevada: Unfortunately for many fans, this early appetizer on the John Ruiz-Evander Holyfield II undercard opened the show during late-afternoon. That's dawn by Vegas weekend standards, so just a couple hundred people got to witness this intriguing, non-televised rumble at the Mandalay Bay Events Center. At least the fighters got plenty of time to shower and catch the featured events afterward.

Bruno Girard was originally scheduled to defend the WBA super middleweight title against Siaca, but was stripped of the belt after failed financial negotiations. Foolish fistic politicos tried to declare another ridiculous "interim" situation, but cooler heads demanded full recognition for the bout's winner, and the affair went off fully sanctioned.

Former titlist Mitchell, 168, 23-1-1 (17), Ozark, Alabama, made the most of his late substitution opportunity and recaptured the belt with a dramatic knockout of number-one ranked Siaca, 168, 14-3 (13), Puerto Rico. There were lapses in action at times, but it remained a fascinating battle throughout.

Siaca, who had lost a close decision to Girard last September, proved he was a worthy contender and stayed busy enough to build an early lead. The 25-year-old Puerto Rican jabbed very well, but he didn't carry enough firepower, and gradually faded down the stretch. Mitchell, 27, made a spectacular turnaround in the second half behind windmill uppercuts and punishing body work. The ninth frame was a rare 9-7 round. After three minutes of solid work, including a knockdown by Mitchell, the fighters saved their best exchanges for after the bell. Referee Jay Nady (USA) took a point away from each man.

The action grew slower and sloppier as the clock unwound. Mitchell's championship experience came into play after a holding lull in the final round. As they reengaged, Mitchell opened up

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Mitchell guns for the knockout against Siaca

quickly. A short left to the gut preceded a perfect mortar upstairs that dropped Siaca flat. Siaca beat the count, but he was very wobbly, and Nady wisely waved it off at 2:32 of the 12th. At the time of the stoppage, Siaca was way ahead on the cards of Dick Houck (USA) and Glenn Trowbridge (USA), by scores of 106-100 and 105-101, respectively. Duane Ford (USA) had Mitchell up 104-102.

Promoter: Don King Productions
(3-3-01)
Phil Woolever

Rosendo Alvarez W 12 Bebis Mendoza

Las Vegas, Nevada: Once again, this top-notch, evenly matched pair found their WBA light flyweight title tilt playing warmup to Evander Holyfield and John Ruiz. If the big boys engaged in half as much of a firefight as this little gem, the Mandalay Bay Events Center would have flipped. Each man displayed excellent fundamentals in a true boxing match. It was another situation where the early birds were treated to a fine contest that was overlooked by television and most ticket holders.

Alvarez, 30, best known for his excellent wars against Ricardo Lopez, was disqualified for multiple shots below the belt during his initial encounter with Mendoza last August. Low blows also played a part in the rematch, but this time Alvarez benefited. If not for a point deduction from referee Tony Weeks (USA) in the third round, Mendoza, 25, making his first defense, would have salvaged a draw and kept the title.

The rematch was much less of a brawl than the first time, as both fighters kept tight defenses. Alvarez, 108, Nicaragua, avoided any trouble with a more reserved attack than usual, and the discipline paid off. Mendoza, 107, Colombia, did a good job of anticipating Alvarez' rhythm and timing him coming in with short, sharp counters. Still, Alvarez scored the majority of the meaningful shots. Mendoza, 26-1 (22), kept firing as he backed away and opened up more in the final frames, but Alvarez, 29-2-1 (18), had already staked a lead that would ultimately hold up.

The crowd was relatively quiet during much of the match, but the silence was not from boredom as much as studying the close action. By the end, the swarm was quite vocal and split in their loyalties. It was razor close, but the judges agreed on nine frames, and the split verdict was justifiable. Dave Moretti (USA) had it 115-112 for Alvarez, Paul Smith (USA) saw it 114-113 for Alvarez, and Paul Thomas (England) had it 114-113 in favor of Mendoza. In this case, THE RING would have settled for a draw.

Hopefully, the two excellent junior flys will meet again. If so, get there early.

Promoter: Don King
(3-3-01)
Phil Woolever

Bones Adams W 12 Ivan Alvarez

Owensboro, Kentucky: Not since 1940, when Sammy Angott decisioned Davey Day for the vacant NBA lightweight title, had Kentucky played host to a world title bout. And while the often sloppy Adams-Alvarez tussle probably wasn't worth waiting 61 years for, hometown hero Adams did send the crowd at the Owensboro Sportscenter home happy by successfully defending the WBA super bantamweight title for the second time.

Adams, 122, Henderson, Kentucky, didn't have his "A" game, but a lack of focus was understandable given the numerous opponent switches he'd suffered through leading up to the fight. Initially, he was supposed to face number-one ranked Yober Ortega, but Ortega pulled out and was replaced by number-two

rated Antonio Cermeno. Cermeno then withdrew, and third-rated Jose Rojas came in, but Rojas was soon out as well, and next thing you knew, it was Cermeno again. But Cermeno hadn't made his way to Owensboro yet by the day before the fight, so on 24 hours notice, the game but unranked Alvarez, 18-6 (8), was brought in. As it turned out, Alvarez, 122, Colombia, put up probably as strong a fight as any of the others might have.

Adams controlled the first couple of rounds with his jab and his lead right to the body, but Alvarez started making noise in the third, scoring with rights and lefts to the bearded champion's head. Late in the fourth, the combatants unloaded simultaneous right hands—Alvarez' to the head, Adams' to the body—and the champion's shot got there first, putting the off-balance Alvarez down. He wasn't hurt, though, and easily beat the count of referee Steve Smoger (USA). Many of the rounds from that point forward were difficult to score, with Alvarez, 31, the more aggressive fighter, while the 26-year-old Adams jabbed, moved, and occasionally winged effective bodyshots. From the seventh through ninth rounds, Adams' workrate dropped off significantly, allowing the challenger to sweep those stanzas on THE RING's scorecard. In the 10th, though, a hard left jab from Bones opened a cut over Alvarez' left eye, forcing him into retreat and allowing Adams to stem the challenger's momentum.

Adams opened up only sparingly in the 11th and 12th, but it didn't matter; the lead he'd built was safe, especially in his home state. Nelson Vasquez (Puerto Rico) saw Adams a 116-111 winner, and Marty Denkin (USA) and Gary Merritt (USA) both had it 115-112. THE RING scored it a bit closer at 115-113.

Next up for Adams, 41-3-3 (19), is an HBO date with bantamweight champ Paulie Ayala. Let's hope Adams doesn't have to suffer through any opponent changes, as that appears on paper to be an excellent matchup.

Television: ESPN2
Promoter: Top Rank
(3-23-01)

PHOTO BY SCOTT ROMER

Adams keeps Alvarez at bay with the jab

Wladimir Klitschko KO 2 Derrick Jefferson

Munich, Germany: For underdog Jefferson's challenge of top heavyweight Klitschko, it was agreed by the experts beforehand that the Detroit, Michigan, tough guy was facing disadvantages in power, skill, and boxing experience. In fact, the only advantage Jefferson seemed to possess waging war on the German-based Ukrainian's turf was his heart. And perhaps, had he found a way to survive eight or nine rounds with Klitschko, he may have had the opportunity to put that advantage to some use. But the 25-year-old terror across the ring from him never gave him that chance, knocking Jefferson, 23-3-1 (19), down three times in five minutes to earn an impressive second-round stoppage.

Late in the first round, Jefferson, 260, walked directly into a short left hook from Klitschko, 246, that sent him sprawling to the deck. He got up well inside the count of referee Gino Rodriguez (USA), and showed his mettle by trying to fire back, but he was hardly able to land a punch.

In the second, Klitschko took his time and found an opening for a quick, picturesque overhand right that met with Jefferson's chin and sent the 33-year-old warrior to the canvas again. It was clear when Jefferson rose that he was ready to be taken out, and Klitschko pounced, sending him down again with an aggressive flurry. Rodriguez quickly halted the fight, at the 2:09 mark.

"I feel I'm ready for anybody in the world," Klitschko, 36-1 (33), said. Despite the troubling loss to journeyman Ross Puritty three years ago, he may be right. It all depends on his heart, about which we'd hoped—in vain—Jefferson would provide some insight.

Television: HBO
Promoter: Universum-Box
(3-24-01)

Fres Oquendo KO 8 Clifford Etienne

Las Vegas, Nevada: There were a lot of questions among insiders about Etienne's punch and his ability to accept a punch. His 10-round decision over Lawrence Clay-Bey last year raised those two questions, and it was expected they would be answered by someone before long. The only surprise was that it was Oquendo who answered them.

The unsung Oquendo shocked Etienne at the Texas Station Gambling Hall and Hotel by knocking him down three times in the first round and an astonishing total of seven times in eight rounds, stopping him at 1:37 of the eighth when "The Black Rhino's" corner threw in the towel. Referee Jay Nady (USA) called a halt to the bout as soon as cornerman J.C. Davis jumped on the ring apron just after Etienne, 19-1 (13), rose from the seventh knockdown.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Etienne hit the deck seven times against Oquendo

Oquendo, 20-0 (11), looked awkward, and Etienne often charged like an enraged bull, which made for comical action at times. But Oquendo, 221, stuck to his game plan of using the jab, throwing overhand rights, and tying Etienne, 225, up when the two got inside.

Etienne first hit the deck courtesy of a right with about a minute to go in the first round. The Black Rhino bent at the waist and lowered his head, allowing Oquendo to hit him on top of the skull with a right hand. Etienne simply collapsed at Oquendo's feet.

"I hurt him with the first punch that knocked him down," Oquendo, 27, said. "I knew I had him. He never hurt me … ever."

The 31-year-old Etienne was able to bounce up quickly after that knockdown and the identical-looking one that followed moments later, and didn't appear in serious trouble. The third knockdown was a different story. It came from another right hand to the top of the head in the final seconds of the first, and when the bell rang, Etienne was a slightly woozy and disoriented fighter heading back to his corner.

Etienne went down once in the second, third, and seventh rounds, all from right hands as he leaned forward. However, the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, heavyweight insisted he was not in trouble, but acknowledged Oquendo, who survived desperate onslaughts from Etienne in the fourth and fifth rounds, was better than he thought.

"I was surprised how durable he was," Etienne said. "I knew he could move, but I didn't think he was that slippery. In the first round, I came in with my head down, and he caught me on the back of the head. I still have a bump. I wasn't worried they were going to stop the fight in the early rounds. I was never hurt. I got back up. I have to give him credit. He was tougher than I thought. I would fight him again. I would fight him tomorrow."

Oquendo, a Puerto Rican living in Chicago, Illinois, isn't looking for a rematch. Instead, he said he hopes to face John Ruiz for the WBA heavyweight title.

"No one thought I had a chance, but I was always confident," Oquendo said. "I came through for the people of Puerto Rico. It would be great to fight Johnny Ruiz. He is a great champion, but Puerto Rico deserves an all Puerto Rican heavyweight championship fight."

Television: Showtime

Promoter: America Presents

(3-23-01)

Kevin Iole

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 1 Malcolm Tunacao

Pichit, Thailand: Thailander Pongsaklek dethroned WBC flyweight champ Tunacao in amazing fashion, dropping him three times en route to a quick stoppage in the first round.

Pongsaklek was aggressive from the outset and floored Tunacao with a solid right when the tall Filipino southpaw was moving along ropes. The champ regained his feet, but was sent to the deck again as the Thailander landed a left-right combo to the face. Pongsaklek went all out for the finish, and finally scored the stoppage when he dropped Tunacao for the third time in the opening canto.

This was the second defense of Tunacao's undistinguished reign, as his first defense, against Celes Kobayashi in Japan, ended in a split draw. This defeat dropped Tunacao's record to 11-1-1 (8), while Pongsaklek raised his credentials to 39-2 (22).

(3-2-01)

Joe Koizumi ■

New Face

(Continued from page 20)

a lot of anger towards him and some of that comes out in the ring. I wouldn't want to see him in the streets. He used to beat my mother, and I heard those stories, not just from my mother, but from my aunts and my grandmother. That only made me even more angry."

So much so that Cadena, 24, used to have a tough time dealing with his temper as a child. Every young boy wants a father to look up to, and Cadena had none. Sure, there were some male figures, like his cousins, but he had no real role models. The middle child of three, he was essentially the man of the house—at the age of eight.

Fighting was one way he could channel his resentment. Since his youth, Cadena always yearned to be a boxer. He used to squeeze his hands into a pair of faded, worn-out gloves and fight other neighborhood kids on the streets of Paterson, with walls serving as ring ropes.

"I loved boxing, and I guess that's because I loved to fight," Cadena said. "I was 15 and I always told my mother I wanted to box, but she was always afraid. She didn't want me to turn into my father."

But finally, after much nagging, Cadena's mother acquiesced and took her son to the gym, where he quickly rose through the amateur ranks and earned trips to the 1996 and 1998 national finals. "Fast Freddie" compiled a sterling 68-4 record, winning the New Jersey Golden Gloves in '96 and '98.

His amateur accomplishments also included winning the Unites States Amateur Championship in the 139-pound class in '98, defeating Keith Kemp, who entered the tournament ranked number one. He also beat highly regarded Marshall Martinez, who would eventually be named to the 2000 U.S. Olympic Team, only to be dismissed from the team for a legal infraction.

Boxing, however, was not always the cure for Cadena's restlessness. His temper nearly ended his budding career before it started. When he was 17, Cadena was arrested for aggravated assault. He served six months in county jail for the crime, stuck behind a cinderblock wall, worried about his future.

"I got into an argument with this guy and one thing led to another," Cadena recalled. "The time I spent in jail helped me out a lot. It gave me time to think about what I did wrong and that I didn't have to settle everything by using violence. That's the way I used to deal with things, with violence. I couldn't even talk to people. I'd just snap. Sometimes, I thought I was turning into my father. My mother used to remind me to please not be like my father. I turned back, I changed, and started attending church."

During his brief pro career, Cadena has shown a relentlessness in attacking opponents. Pat Lynch, Cadena's co-manager along with Henry Cortes, likes Cadena's aggressive style. Lynch should know a thing or two about such fighters, since he also represents human highlight reel Arturo Gatti.

"Freddie is a lot like Arturo," Lynch said. "He has an exciting style, but he's also a great boxer who can punch with either hand. He's shown me shades of a young Arturo Gatti, someone with a great chin."

Lynch saw that chin tested severely in Cadena's bout with former Puerto Rican amateur champion Alberto Santiago on January 27 in Atlantic City. Santiago entered the bout as a dangerous prospect. But that was not evident in the second round of the bout, when Cadena saw an opening and struck, sending Santiago toppling to the canvas. Santiago, however, fought back and rocked Cadena in the third. The scare fueled Cadena to retaliate in the fourth with a swarming assault that resulted in a stoppage victory at the 3:00 mark.

"The Santiago fight is something we don't want to see again from Freddie, and it was a tougher fight than we wanted to put him in this early in his career," Lynch said. "Some people may have called that fight a risk, since Santiago was also a highly thought-of prospect. We definitely got one thing out of that fight: Freddie showed he definitely has what it takes to be a champ, there's no doubt about that."

ESPN2's studio analyst Max Kellerman got a chance to catch a glimpse of Cadena against Andre Eason during a *Friday Night Fights* telecast on October 13, 2000, which Cadena walked away from with a four-round decision. "Eason is not a soft touch, and Cadena was very impressive against Andre," Kellerman said. "Cadena is a pretty accurate puncher, and sometimes he and Eason would punch at the same time, and Cadena's punches would be straighter and get there first."

The one negative Lynch is wary of is Cadena's tendency to brawl when it's unnecessary.

"Freddie gets his machismo into it too much," Lynch said. "He doesn't have to go toe-to-toe all of the time, because he's really a great boxer. That will come with time. It's our job to keep him busy and start making some noise. We'd like to get nine fights for him this year."

Cadena would like to skip his past

In the meantime, Cadena continues to train hard, and tries to forget about his past. He has a four-year-old son of his own now, Freddie Cadena Jr., and, unlike his own father, the fighter wants to be a presence in his child's life.

"If I think about the past, that would mess me up," Cadena said, "so I try not to. It's hard, though. I just think of all the negative things that have happened to me when I was younger, and use that as a positive. I think more about my son, and how I want to be there for him. I don't want my son to be alone like I was. I think if I use everything I have, I can go far with boxing."

Then Cadena pauses and thinks about the knock on the door that he knows will come one day.

"I'll listen," he said, "but I'll never forgive him." ■

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Aug. 2000: Hamed! And The Men Who Want To Kick His Naz! Plus: David Reid, James Prince, Anthony Fletcher, Micky Ward, final beatings, white hopes.

Sept. 2000: A New Look At Lennox Lewis: Is He An All-Time Great? Plus: Winky Wright, Michael Moorer, De La Hoya & Vargas, Eddie McGoorty.

Oct. 2000 (92-Page Special): Move Up Or Shut Up! We're Sick Of Roy Jones' Heavyweight Tease. Plus: Lennox Lewis, Tapia & Romero, Hasim Rahman, Dwight Qawi, Al Palzer, fight films, best refs.

Nov. 2000: Make The Tyson-Lewis Fight Now! Plus: Mosley-De La Hoya, Acelino Freitas, Pat Lawlor, Fred Norwood, Jeff Chandler, Vito Antuofermo.

(ALL-COLOR BEGINNING WITH THE DECEMBER 2000 ISSUE)

Dec. 2000: The Hell With Tyson—Tua Is The Man Who Could Beat Lewis. Plus: Mike Tyson, Felix Trinidad, Wladimir Klitschko, Trilla in Manila, U.S. vs. World, Toxey Hall.

Jan. 2001 (108-Page Extra): Trinidad's Destiny: Jones Is On His Mind ... But Vargas Is In His Face! Plus: Naseem Hamed, Tszyu-Judah, Evander Holyfield, Willie Bean, 20 greatest middleweights.

Feb. 2001: It's Not Over For Oscar: *The Ring's* Five-Step Recovery Plan. Plus: Bob Arum, Dingaan Thobela, Hernandez brothers, U.S. Olympic team, future pound-for-pounders.

March 2001 (108-Page Extra): Tyson! Forget About Retirement ... A Title Shot Awaits! Plus: Ayala-Tapia II, Audley Harrison, Chris Byrd, Kirk Johnson, Julio Cesar Chavez, Boone Kirkman, 12 most exciting rounds.

April 2001: A New Beginning ... A New Middle: Felix Trinidad Is Ready To Conquer Another Division! Plus: Shane Mosley, Lennox Lewis, Paul Andrews, boxing business.

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All 8 $31

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WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were compiled as of February 2001, the WBC as of February 2001, and the IBF as of January 2001.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Lennox Lewis (GB)	C	–	C
Evander Holyfield (USA)	–	C	–
Mike Tyson (USA)	1	5	9
Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)	2	6	–
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	3	–	8
Clifford Etienne (USA)	4	–	11
Larry Donald (USA)	5	4	7
David Tua (NZ)	6	7	5
Henry Akinwande (GB)	7	8	–
Vaughn Bean (USA)	8	12	–
Lance Whitaker (USA)	9	–	–
Michael Moorer (USA)	10	–	–
Vacant	–	1	1
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	2	–
John Ruiz (USA)	–	3	12
David Izon (NIG)	14	9	–
Oleg Maskaev (UKR)	24	10	10
Vacant	–	–	2
Danell Nicholson (USA)	15	–	3
Hasim Rahman (USA)	11	–	4
Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)	–	–	6

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	C	–	–
Virgil Hill (USA)	–	C	–
Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)	–	–	C
Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)	1	5	6
Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)	2	–	10
Louis Azille (DR)	3	4	8
Torsten May (GER)	4	10	2
Dale Brown (CAN)	5	–	–
Ezra Sellars (USA)	6	–	7
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	7	6	–
Arthur Williams (USA)	8	7	4
Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)	9	–	–
James Toney (USA)	10	2	5
Vacant	–	1	–
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	13	3	–
Carl Thompson (GB)	12	8	3
Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)	–	9	–
Alex Gonzales (USA)	–	–	1
Freemon Barr (BAH)	–	–	9

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	C	C	C
Michael Nunn (USA)	1	–	–
Clinton Woods (GB)	2	5	4
Thomas Ulrich (GER)	3	12	–
Yawe Davis (ITA)	4	–	–
Jean-Marc Mormerck (FRA)	5	–	–
Reggie Johnson (USA)	6	8	10
Eric Harding (USA)	7	–	3
Julio Gonzalez (USA)	8	6	–
Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)	9	4	1
Derrick Harmon (USA)	10	11	8
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	1	–
Jean-Mark Mormeck (FRA)	–	2	–
Frank Liles (USA)	–	3	–
Richard Hall (USA)	16	7	–
David Telesco (USA)	–	9	12
Robert Koon (USA)	25	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Antonio Tarver (USA)	13	–	5
Lincoln Carter (USA)	11	–	6
Will Taylor (USA)	30	–	7
Billy Lewis (USA)	–	–	9

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Davey Hilton (CAN)	C	–	–
Bruno Girard (FRA)	–	C	–
Sven Ottke (GER)	–	–	C
Eric Lucas (CAN)	1	–	–
Dingaan Thobela (SA)	2	–	–
Glenn Catley (GB)	3	–	–
Markus Beyer (GER)	4	–	12
Mario Velt (GER)	5	5	8
Dana Rosenblatt (USA)	6	3	6
Stephane Ouellet (CAN)	7	–	–
Byron Mitchell (USA)	8	2	–
David Starie (GB)	9	7	–
Mads Larsen (DEN)	10	6	–
Manuel Siacca (PR)	–	1	–
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	12	4	5
Charles Brewer (USA)	14	8	4
Thomas Tate (USA)	16	9	3
Richie Woodhall (GB)	–	10	–
James Butler (USA)	20	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Syd Vanderpool (CAN)	–	–	7
Omar Sheika (USA)	13	–	9
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	–	11	10

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Keith Holmes (USA)	C	–	–
William Joppy (USA)	–	C	–
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	–	–	C
Erland Betare (FRA)	1	–	–
David Reid (USA)	2	2	3
Howard Eastman (GB)	3	1	5
Robert McCracken (GB)	4	–	–
Ali Ennebati (FRA)	5	–	11
Kevin Palmer (USA)	6	–	–
Carl Daniels (USA)	7	6	1
Tito Mendoza (PAN)	8	–	8
Nick Martinez (USA)	9	–	–
Jerry Elliott (NIG)	10	–	–
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	–	3	12
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	4	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	–	5	–
Antonio Perugino (ITA)	18	7	–
Ryan Rhodes (GB)	30	8	–
Rito Ruvalcaba (MEX)	–	9	–
Lonnie Bradley (USA)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Stephane Ouellet (CAN)	–	11	4
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	–	6
Brian Barbosa (USA)	13	–	7
Santos Cardona (PR)	–	–	9
Armand Krajnc (SLV)	–	–	10

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Francisco Castillejo (SPA)	C	–	–
Felix Trinidad (PR)	–	C	C
Roman Karmazin (RUS)	1	5	–
Fernando Vargas (USA)	2	2	3
Winky Wright (USA)	3	3	1
J.C. Candelo (COL)	4	–	9
Alfred Ankamah (GHA)	5	–	–
Quirino Garcia (MEX)	6	–	–
Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)	7	–	–
Nicolas Cervera (COL)	8	–	–
Tony Marshall (USA)	9	–	–
Akira Ohigashi (JAP)	10	10	–
Jose Flores (MEX)	12	1	5
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	4	12
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	13	6	–
Frank Olsen (DEN)	25	7	–
Julio Cesar Vazquez (ARG)	–	8	–
Kevin Kelly (USA)	16	9	–
Robert Frazier (USA)	–	–	2
Bronco McKart (USA)	19	–	4
Ross Thompson (USA)	–	–	6
Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)	–	–	7
Alex Bunema (USA)	–	–	8
Emmett Linton (USA)	–	12	10

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Shane Mosley (USA)	C	–	–
Andrew Lewis (GUY)	23	C	7
Vacant	–	–	C
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	1	–	–
Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)	2	–	4
Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)	3	–	–
Kofi Jantuah (GHA)	4	9	10
Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	5	4	–
Carlos Baldomir (ARG)	6	10	–
Danny Perez (USA)	7	–	–
Oba Carr (USA)	8	8	3
Ike Quartey (GHA)	9	–	–
Thomas Damgaard (DEN)	10	3	–
Ricardo Mayorga (CR)	–	1	–
Arturo Gatti (USA)	–	2	11
Michael Trabant (GERE)	21	5	–
Chantel Stanciel (USA)	19	6	–
James Page (USA)	–	7	–
Raul Frank (USA)	–	–	1
Vernon Forrest (USA)	–	–	2
Frank Olsen (DEN)	–	–	5
Michele Piccirillo (ITA)	14	–	6
Larry Marks (USA)	–	–	8
Cory Spinks (USA)	12	–	9

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	C	C	–
Zab Judah (USA)	–	–	C

Oktay Urkal (TUR)	1	4	10
Hector Camacho Jr (PR)	2	1	7
Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	3	2	–
Arturo Gatti (CAN)	4	–	–
Gianluca Branco (ITA)	5	–	–
Ray Oliveira (USA)	6	–	6
Ricky Quiles (USA)	7	–	–
Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)	8	–	–
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	9	5	–
John-John Molina (PR)	10	7	–
Randall Bailey (USA)	20	3	8
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	–	6	–
Ricky Hatton (GB)	15	8	12
Alex Trujillo (PR)	–	9	–
Hiroyuki Maeda (JAP)	30	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Allan Vester (DEN)	19	–	3
George Scott (SWE)	28	–	4
Terronn Millett (USA)	–	–	5
Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)	11	11	9

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Paul Spadafora (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Steve Johnston (USA)	1	–	3
Julien Lorcy (FRA)	2	1	6
Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)	3	–	–
Lovemore Ndou (SA)	4	–	–
Cesar Bazan (MEX)	5	–	–
Thembinkosi Ntyenene (SA)	6	–	–
Diego Corrales (USA)	7	–	4
Juan Lazcano (USA)	8	–	5
Sungho Yuh (KOR)	9	–	–
Alex Trujillo (PR)	10	–	–
Alberto Sicurella (ARG)	–	2	–
Rick Yoshimura (JAP)	–	3	–
Gilbert Serrano (VEN)	–	4	–
Stefano Zoff (ITA)	12	5	–
Jean-Baptiste Mendy (FRA)	19	6	–
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	7	–
Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)	25	8	–
Djamel Lifa (FRA)	20	9	–
Dennis Holbaek (DEN)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Billy Irwin (CAN)	–	–	7
Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)	13	–	8
Joel Perez (USA)	–	–	9
Angel Manfredy (USA)	–	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Floyd Mayweather (USA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Steve Forbes (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Jesus Chavez (USA)	1	7	5
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	2	–	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	3	–	–
Tiger Ari (PHIL)	4	–	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	5	1	–
Philip Ndou (SA)	6	–	–
Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)	7	2	8
Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)	8	–	–
Affif Djelti (FRA)	9	–	–
Koji Arisawa (JAP)	10	9	–
Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)	–	3	–
Jongkwon Baek (KOR)	–	4	–
Luis Navarro (USA)	15	5	6
Jorge Barrios (ARG)	–	6	–
Jose Miguel Cotto (PR)	–	8	–
Michael Gomez (GB)	19	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
John Brown (USA)	–	–	2
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	–	3
Carlos Hernandez (USA)	–	–	4
David Santos (USA)	–	–	7
Juan Arias (USA)	–	–	9
Robert Garcia (USA)	–	12	10

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Guty Espadas (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Derrick Gainer (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Injin Chi (KOR)	1	–	–
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	2	2	–
Johnny Tapia (USA)	3	–	–
Scott Harrison (GB)	4	–	–
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	5	–	–
Manuel Calvo (SPA)	6	–	–
Edgar Barcenas (MEX)	7	–	–
Juan Carlos Ramirez (MEX)	8	–	–
Hector Velazquez (MEX)	9	–	–
Tony Wehbee (AUS)	10	–	–

Naseem Hamed (GB)	–	1	3
Victor Polo (COL)	–	3	2
Philip Ndou (SA)	–	4	–
Angel Vasquez (PR)	–	5	4
Lewis Woods (US)	–	6	–
Fred Norwood (USA)	–	7	–
Pablo Chacon (ARG)	–	8	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	–	9	–
Daniel Seda (PR)	24	10	–
Manuel Medina (MEX)	15	–	1
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	–	–	5
David Toledo (USA)	–	–	6
Oscar Larios (MEX)	–	–	7
Panther Yanagida (JAP)	20	–	8
Augie Sanchez (USA)	11	–	9
Frankie Toledo (USA)	–	–	10

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Willie Jorrin (USA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Clarence Adams (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Michael Brodie (GB)	1	–	10
Oscar Larios (MEX)	2	–	–
Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)	3	–	3
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	4	5	4
Israel Vazquez (MEX)	5	–	6
Yongjin Cho (KOR)	6	–	–
Cesar Soto (MEX)	7	–	–
Marcos Licona (USA)	8	–	–
Agapito Sanchez (DR)	9	–	–
Hector Julia Avila (DR)	10	–	9
Yobert Ortega (VEN)	–	1	–
Antonio Cermeno (VEN)	–	2	–
Jose Rojas (VEN)	29	3	–
Bugiarso (INDO)	–	4	–
Danny Romero (USA)	–	6	–
Nestor Garza (MEX)	–	7	12
Vladislav Antonov (RUS)	11	8	2
Kozo Ishii (JAP)	–	9	–
Osamu Sato (JAP)	13	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
F. Rakkiatgym (INDO)	–	–	5
Sergei Devakov (UKR)	21	–	7
Arnel Barotillo (AUSTRL)	24	–	8

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Paul Ayala (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Tim Austin (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Ricardo Barajas (MEX)	1	10	–
Genaro Garcia (USA)	2	8	–
Adan Vargas (MEX)	3	2	5
Jess Maca (PHIL)	4	–	–
Cuauhtemoc Gomez (MEX)	5	–	11
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	6	–	–
Hugo Dianzo (MEX)	7	9	–
Alejandro Estrada (MEX)	8	–	–
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	9	6	–
Luigi Castiglione (ITA)	10	–	9
Eidy Moya (VEN)	–	1	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	–	3	–
Sahoiu Sithchai Condo (THAI)	–	4	–
Rafael Marquez (MEX)	13	5	10
Johnny Tapia (USA)	–	7	–
Jesus Perez (COL)	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Pete Frissina (USA)	–	–	3
Danny Romero (USA)	–	–	4
Arthur Johnson (USA)	–	–	6
Steve Dotse (GHA)	–	–	7
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	–	–	8

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Masanori Tokuyama (JAP)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Leo Gamez (VEN)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Felix Machado (VEN)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	1	–	–
In Joo Cho (KOR)	2	–	–
Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)	3	–	–
Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)	4	–	–
Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)	5	–	–
Vernie Torres (USA)	6	–	7
Luis Bolanos (COL)	7	10	6
Pedro Alcazar (PAN)	8	–	–
Seungrok Choi (KOR)	9	–	–
Martin Castillo (MEX)	10	–	–
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	–	1	8
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	–	2	3
Mbwana Matumla (TNZ)	–	3	–
Alexander Munoz (VEN)	–	4	–
Sornpichai Pisnurachank (THAI)	–	5	–
Luigi Castiglione (ITA)	–	6	–
Hideki Todaka (JAP)	11	7	–
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	–	8	–

Setsuo Kobayashi (JAP)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Adonis Rivas (NIC)	–	–	4
Mauricio Pastrana (COL)	–	–	5
Julio Gamboa (NIC)	–	–	9
Diego Morales (MEX)	–	12	10

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Eric Morel (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Irene Pacheco (COL)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	1	–	–
Alex Ali Baba (GHA)	2	9	–
Mike Trejo (USA)	3	4	5
Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)	4	8	1
Gerson Guerrero (MEX)	5	–	–
Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)	6	–	–
Hayato Asai (JAP)	7	–	–
Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)	8	–	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	9	7	4
Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)	10	–	–
Jose Lopez (VEN)	–	1	–
Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)	–	2	–
Isidro Garcia (MEX)	–	3	–
Mzukisi Sikali (SA)	28	5	–
Panieng Okuda (THAI)	–	6	–
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Hawk Makepula (SA)	–	–	3
Martin Castillo (MEX)	–	11	6
Ferid Ben Jeddou (TUN)	–	–	7
David Guerault (FRA)	12	–	8
Shiro Yahiro (JAP)	–	–	9
Zoltan Lunka (TUR)	20	–	10

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Yosam Choi (KOR)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Bebis Mendoza (COL)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Jorge Arce (MEX)	1	6	4
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	2	2	–
Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)	3	–	–
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	4	–	–
Eric Ortiz (MEX)	5	12	–
Takayuki Korogi (JAP)	6	–	–
Kohki Tanaka (JAP)	7	9	–
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)	8	–	–
Jesus Martinez (MEX)	9	–	–
Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)	10	8	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	1	–
Yura Dimas (MON)	17	3	–
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	–	4	10
Pongsaklek Nakornton (THAI)	–	5	–
Nelson Dieppa (DR)	–	7	–
Andy Tabanas (PHIL)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Zolani Petelo (SA)	–	–	2
Pongsaklek Sithkanongsak (THAI)	–	–	3
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	–	–	5
Ratanapol Sor Vorapin (THAI)	–	–	6
Alex Sanchez (PR)	–	–	7
Oscar Andrade (MEX)	–	–	8
Everardo Morales (MEX)	–	–	9

STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Vacant	**–**	**–**	**C**
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	1	–	5
Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)	2	–	6
Juan Keb Baas (MEX)	3	–	–
Jaewon Kim (KOR)	4	–	–
Erdene Chuluun (MON)	5	–	–
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	6	–	–
Yutaka Niida (JAP)	7	–	–
Khulile Makeba (SA)	8	12	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	9	5	–
Zarlit Rodrigo (PHIL)	10	–	–
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	–	1	–
Daniel Reyes (COL)	–	2	1
Noel Arambulet (VEN)	–	3	12
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	4	–
Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)	12	6	–
Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)	–	7	–
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	–	8	7
Udomdet Porpaoin (THAI)	–	9	–
Fasan Pongsawan (THAI)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Kermin Guardia (COL)	–	–	3
Rocky Palma (JAP)	–	–	4
Surachai Saengmorokot (THAI)	–	–	8
Andy Tabanas (PHIL)	–	–	9
Myungsup Park (KOR)	–	–	10

CLASSIC

From THE RING, August 1991

Fat, Funny, And Forty-Two, But Certainly No Fraud:

FOREMAN GIVES HOLYFIELD A FIGHT ... AND THE WORLD A THRILL

By Jeff Ryan

It was as if George Foreman and Evander Holyfield were sharing their canvas with Salvador Dali. The third round had ended, and now, the air was filled with more than just the chants of "George! George! George!" Suddenly, Atlantic City's Convention Center was smokier than Demi Moore's voice, courtesy of a smoke bomb ignited at ringside. A surrealistic image, but also an ironic one. At roughly the same time fans were peering through the haze, they were realizing that Foreman's four-year promise to give the heavyweight king hell hadn't been a smoke screen after all.

"Who would think George could go 12 with me at a furious pace," Holyfield would marvel after he'd left the ring with a unanimous decision, three versions of the heavyweight title, and some newfound respect for his elders.

"He made me do things I didn't want to do, punch when I didn't want to punch. He cut off the ring. At 42, George is not dead."

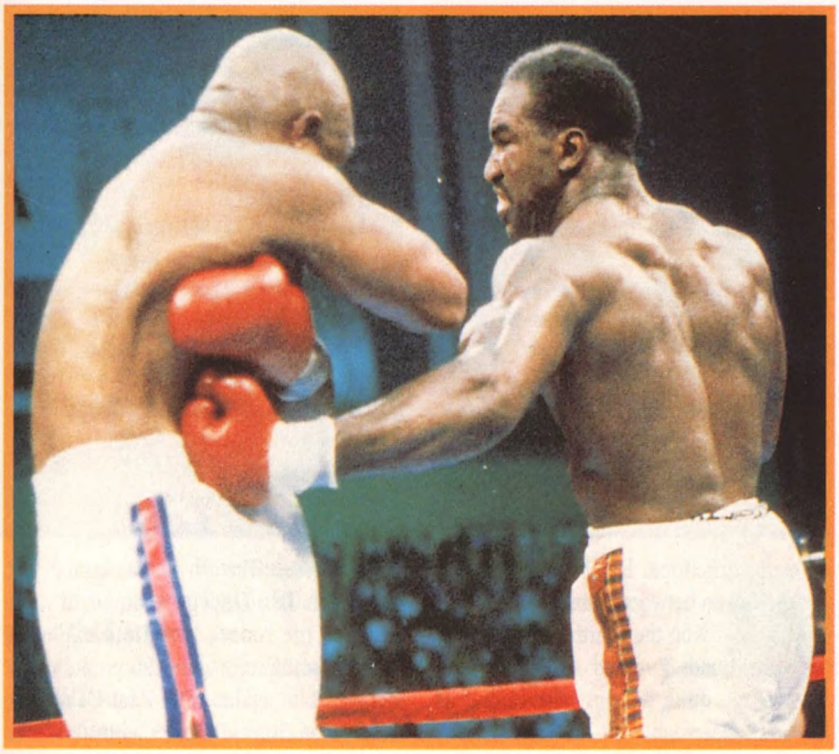
Foreman rarely took a backward step. He rattled the younger, faster champion with haymakers, and stayed on his feet under a furious pinpoint assault that would have felled an oil derrick. He stood in his corner after every round. He ended the fight swollen, gasping for air, and stumbling, but with a tired, safety-conscious Holyfield clinging to him like a magnet on the door of Big George's refrigerator.

"He had the points, but I made a point," Foreman would say from behind dark glasses at the crowded postfight press conference. "If you can live, you can dream. I'm not through dreaming yet."

Wasn't it George Foreman who once handed out doses of reality like he was the world's surliest pharmacist? Wasn't it Foreman who, in the '70s, used a pair of gloved sledgehammers to demonstrate that the power of positive thinking is no match for a pinch of leather between the cheek and gums? Ken Norton liked to philosophize, "What the mind can conceive, the body can achieve." Then he faced Foreman and had an out-of-body experience that left him staring into a doctor's pen light and trying to remember what year it was.

Foreman didn't recapture his youth in

The rhythm did not change over 12 rounds: Holyfield fired from a safe distance, and Foreman, utilizing a cross-armed defense, chugged forward in an effort to enter his range (above). The champion's legs held up well, and when Holyfield stopped moving, Foreman clinched (right).



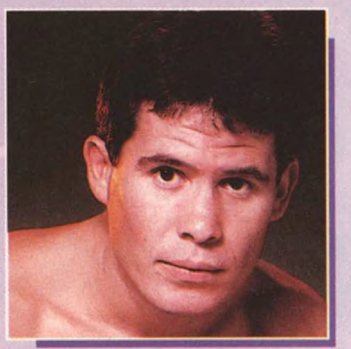
Holyfield's attack featured combinations to the head and single hooks to Foreman's side. He rocked the challenger on numerous occasions, but couldn't fell him.

Atlantic City, but he wasn't foolish enough to try, either. There was no menacing prefight stare, no attempt at intimidation. As he stood in his corner, he looked like some helpless old man huddled in a doorway. A dingy black jacket covered his faded red terrycloth robe. Holyfield probably felt like walking across the ring and handing him a quarter, until he remembered that Big George was taking home more than $12-million.

Had he attempted to become the fighter who had dismantled Norton, Joe Frazier, and Ron Lyle—the tightly coiled assassin obsessed with an early knockout—Foreman probably would have flopped from exhaustion before the fifth round. Instead, he answered the opening bell looking relaxed and patient. Perhaps too relaxed and patient. He landed only a few jabs, and Holyfield easily captured the round.

In the second, however, Old Man River started flowing. Foreman rocked Holyfield with two lefts, then hammered

THE RING RATINGS, August 1991



Julio Cesar Chavez

HEAVYWEIGHTS
1. **Evander Holyfield**, Atlanta, GA
2. **Mike Tyson**, Catskill, NY
3. **Razor Ruddock**, Canada
4. **Riddick Bowe**, Brooklyn, NY
5. **Tim Witherspoon**, Philadelphia, PA
6. **Ray Mercer**, Union, NJ
7. **Carl Williams**, White Plains, NY
8. **George Foreman**, Marshall, TX
9. **Lennox Lewis**, England
10. **Pierre Coetzer**, South Africa

CRUISERWEIGHTS
1. **Jeff Lampkin**, Youngstown, OH
2. **Bobby Czyz**, Montgomery, NJ
3. **Taoufik Belbouli**, France
4. **Robert Daniels**, Miami, FL
5. **Massimiliano Duran**, Italy
6. **Anaclet Wamba**, France
7. **Johnny Nelson**, England
8. **James Warring**, Miami, FL
9. **Nate Miller**, Philadelphia, PA
10. **Al Cole**, Newark, NJ

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
1. **Virgil Hill**, Las Vegas, NV
2. **Prince Charles Williams**, Mansfield, OH
3. **Thomas Hearns**, Las Vegas, NV
4. **Dennis Andries**, Detroit, MI
5. **Jeff Harding**, Australia
6. **Graciano Rocchigiani**, Germany
7. **Booker T. Word**, Ypsilanti, MI
8. **Frank Tate**, Houston, TX
9. **Anthony Hembrick**, Beckley, WV
10. **Andrew Maynard**, Laurel, MD

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Lindell Holmes**, Detroit, MI
2. **Victor Cordova**, Panama
3. **Christophe Tiozzo**, France
4. **Tony Byrd**, Los Angeles, CA
5. **Mauro Galvano**, Italy
6. **Tony Thornton**, Glassboro, NJ
7. **Merqui Sosa**, New York, NY
8. **John Jarvis**, Richmond, VA
9. **Juan Carlos Gimenez**, Paraguay
10. **Dario Matteoni**, Argentina

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Michael Nunn**, Los Angeles, CA
2. **Mike McCallum**, Brooklyn, NY
3. **Julian Jackson**, Virgin Islands
4. **Sumbu Kalambay**, Italy
5. **Steve Collins**, Brockton, MA
6. **Chris Eubank**, England
7. **James Toney**, Ann Arbor, MI
8. **Michael Watson**, England
9. **Nigel Benn**, England
10. **Reggie Johnson**, Houston, TX

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Terry Norris**, Mission Valley, CA
2. **Gilbert Dele**, France
3. **Gianfranco Rosi**, Italy
4. **John David Jackson**, Tucson, AZ
5. **Julio Cesar Vasquez**, Argentina
6. **Jorge Castro**, Argentina
7. **Tyrone Trice**, Milwaukee, WI
8. **Aaron Davis**, Bronx, NY
9. **Glenn Wolfe**, Miami, FL
10. **Mark Breland**, Brooklyn, NY

WELTERWEIGHTS
1. **Meldrick Taylor**, Cheltenham, PA
2. **Simon Brown**, Germantown, MD
3. **Buddy McGirt**, Brentwood, NY
4. **Maurice Blocker**, Washington, D.C.
5. **Glenwood Brown**, Plainfield, NJ
6. **Lonnie Smith**, Denver, CO
7. **Genaro Leon**, Mexico
8. **Crisanto Espana**, Ireland
9. **Hiroyuki Yoshino**, Japan
10. **Santos Cardona**, Puerto Rico

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez**, Mexico
2. **Loreto Garza**, Sacramento, CA
3. **Roger Mayweather**, Las Vegas, NV
4. **Charles Murray**, Essex County, NJ
5. **Greg Haugen**, Henderson, NV
6. **Hector Camacho**, Big Cypress, FL
7. **Juan Coggi**, Argentina
8. **Pat Barrett**, England
9. **Terrence Alli**, New York, NY
10. **Angel Hernandez**, Puerto Rico

LIGHTWEIGHTS
1. **Pernell Whitaker**, Norfolk, VA
2. **Tracy Spann**, Plainfield, NJ
3. **Freddie Pendleton**, Miami, FL
4. **Juan Nazario**, Puerto Rico
5. **Poli Diaz**, Spain
6. **Anthony Jones**, Detroit, MI
7. **Pedro Sanchez**, New York, NY
8. **Darryl Tyson**, Washington, D.C.
9. **Sharmba Mitchell**, Takoma Park, MD
10. **Chil Sung Chun**, South Korea

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
1. **Azumah Nelson**, Ghana
2. **Tony Lopez**, Sacramento, CA
3. **Brian Mitchell**, South Africa
4. **Jeff Fenech**, Australia
5. **John-John Molina**, Puerto Rico
6. **Genaro Hernandez**, Los Angeles, CA
7. **Joey Gamache**, Lewiston, ME
8. **Jerry Ngobeni**, South Africa
9. **Frankie Mitchell**, Philadelphia, PA
10. **Bernard Taylor**, Knoxville, TN

FEATHERWEIGHTS
1. **Marcos Villasana**, Mexico
2. **Yung Kyun Park**, South Korea
3. **Louie Espinosa**, Phoenix, AZ
4. **Antonio Esparragoza**, Venezuela
5. **Troy Dorsey**, Dallas, TX
6. **Maurizio Stecca**, Italy
7. **Ricardo Cepeda**, Bronx, NY
8. **Rafael Ruelas**, Arleta, CA
9. **Eloy Rojas**, Venezuela
10. **Tom Johnson**, Detroit, MI

him with a series of rights as the crowd erupted. The champion was wobbled again by a hook in the third. But when Foreman telegraphed a left uppercut, Holyfield took a short step back, as he did when Buster Douglas missed a right uppercut last October, and landed a crunching left hook. Foreman shuddered, his legs heading in opposite directions. But he remained on his feet—even between rounds.

Holyfield won the fourth, but Foreman rallied in rounds five and six. Then came the seventh, quite possibly the Round of the Year. Foreman sent Holyfield stumbling from a right to the head in the opening moments, then landed a series of punishing crosses. The crowd was insane. But just when Big George seemed to have clinched the round, Holyfield exploded with a combination, and Foreman's legs betrayed him again. "The Real Deal" battered "The Surreal Deal" with a vicious assault before Foreman closed the round with a solid right uppercut.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS
1. **Jesse Benavides**, Corpus Christi, TX
2. **Welcome Ncita**, South Africa
3. **Kiyoshi Hatanaka**, Japan
4. **Pedro Decima**, Argentina
5. **Luis Mendoza**, Colombia
6. **Paul Banke**, Quail Valley, CA
7. **Jesus Salud**, San Diego, CA
8. **Tracy Patterson**, New Paltz, NY
9. **Baby Sugar Rojas**, Colombia
10. **Jemal Hinton**, District Heights, MD

BANTAMWEIGHTS
1. **Orlando Canizales**, Laredo, TX
2. **Greg Richardson**, Youngstown, OH
3. **Luisito Espinosa**, Philippines
4. **Raul Perez**, Mexico
5. **Pepillo Valdez**, Mexico
6. **Yong Hoon Lee**, South Korea
7. **Israel Contreras**, Venezuela
8. **Gaby Canizales**, Laredo, TX
9. **Geraldo Martinez**, San Jose, CA
10. **Billy Hardy**, England

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT
1. **Khaosai Galaxy**, Thailand
2. **Sung Kil Moon**, South Korea
3. **Robert Quiroga**, San Antonio, TX
4. **Kid Akeem**, Las Vegas
5. **Jose Ruiz**, Puerto Rico
6. **Johnny Tapia**, Albuquerque, NM
7. **Nana Konadu**, Ghana
8. **Thalernsak Sithbaobey**, Thailand
9. **David Griman**, Venezuela
10. **Rey Paciones**, Philippines

FLYWEIGHTS
1. **Muangchai Kittikasem**, Thailand
2. **Dave McAuley**, Ireland
3. **Elvis Alvarez**, Colombia
4. **Sot Chitalada**, Thailand
5. **Leopard Tamakuma**, Japan
6. **Jung Koo Chang**, South Korea
7. **Yul Woo Lee**, South Korea
8. **Jesus Rojas**, Venezuela
9. **Richard Clarke**, Jamaica
10. **Rodolfo Blanco**, Colombia

"You hit him," Foreman would say, "and when you get ready to finish him, he almost finishes you."

The seventh would be Foreman's last great effort. He'd hurt Holyfield with a left-right in the 10th, and force his rival to hold in the 11th and 12th. But Foreman would almost topple from a series of rights in the final moments of the ninth, be penalized a point for low blows in the 11th, and find his aged body barely able to respond when he tried to summon an impressive final-round flurry.

Still, the scoring seemed out of line. Jerry Roth gave Holyfield a 117-110 edge, and Eugene Grant favored the champion by a 116-111 count. Only the card of Tom Kaczmarek (115-112 for Holyfield) seemed to accurately reflect the changing momentum and Foreman's ability to often dictate the action. (THE RING tabbed the bout 116-113 for Holyfield.)

"I came within inches of my dream of being heavyweight champion of the world," Big George said, talking for the first time about measurements without joking about his waistline. "The only thing that stopped me was the jaw of that great champion. I've never seen anyone take punches like that. He has a desire I don't think will be duplicated."

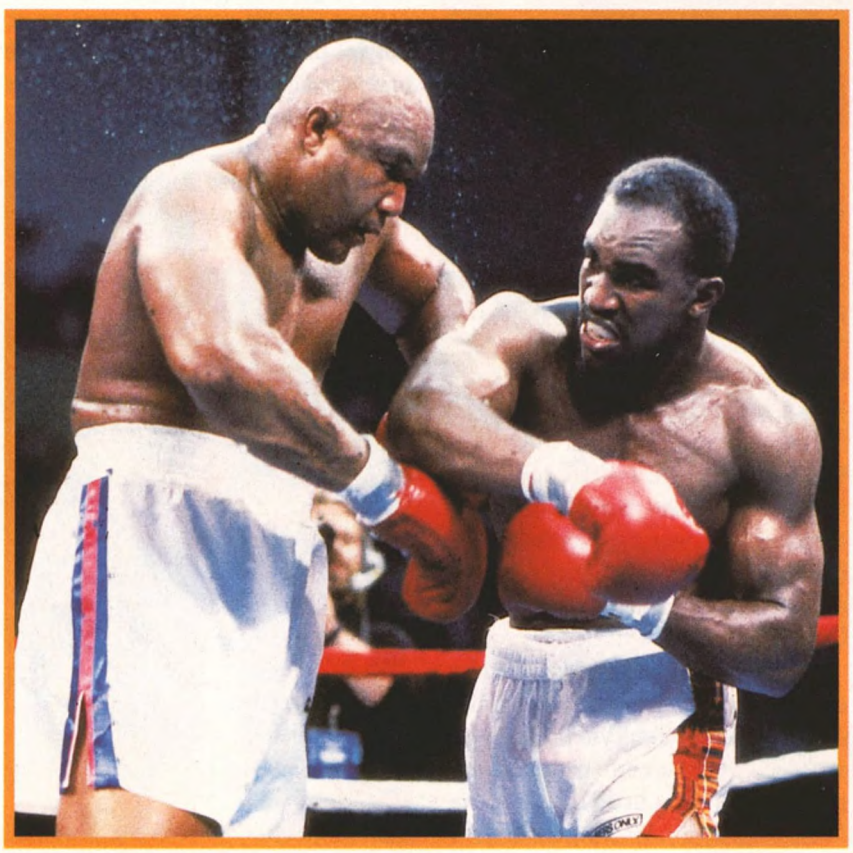
With that, Foreman headed back to his dressing room, where two pizzas had just been delivered. You can work up quite an appetite chasing dreams.

"I hit George with all I had," said Holyfield, who hadn't been extended the distance since Dwight Muhammad Qawi lasted 15 rounds in a WBA junior heavyweight title fight in 1986. "For five years, I hit guys with all I had and they went out. George didn't. He proved to me he's not old."

Holyfield and Foreman proved an awful lot to each other. But what did their "Battle Of The Ages" prove to the rest of us? Some surprising things. For instance:

1) Holyfield's forecast could call for a long period of reign: It had been assumed that Holyfield would administer a brutal beating to Rev. George in a few easy rounds, but would then have to walk a hellish gauntlet consisting of Mike and The Mechanics—one Mr. M. Tyson and a group of young heavyweight studs with an impressive tool collection.

But a funny thing happened on the way to Holyfield's battle with the American Gladiators: He ran into a one-man obstacle course at the same time that the young gladiators were discovering that their suits of armor needed tailoring. In a period of four days surrounding Holyfield-Foreman, Bruce Seldon was kayoed by Oliver McCall, Michael Moorer looked slow in his heavyweight debut against Terry



When Holyfield attacked, he did so with conviction. "I hit George with all I had," said Holyfield. "For five years, I hit guys with all I had and they went out. George didn't. He proved to me he's not old."

Foreman took punishment in the third, absorbing a left hook from Holyfield that sent his legs heading in opposite directions. But Big George remained on his feet—even between rounds.

Davis, Tommy Morrison was wobbled and outboxed by Yuri Vaulin before rallying to score a kayo, and Riddick Bowe was awarded a highly disputed decision over Tony Tubbs.

The feeling here is that Holyfield, who lacks the firepower to repel an onrushing Tyson, gets crushed by Iron Mike early. But if The Real Deal—who displayed a reliable chin against Foreman—manages to win, or if a Tyson fight continues to be delayed, the champion looks like more of a lock to remain commander-in-chief than George Bush.

2) Foreman is one of history's greatest heavyweights: Remember the media's canonization of Mike Tyson a few years ago? Well, Foreman heard the same words gasped about him in 1974: *Awesome. Incredible. Scary.* And the same questions: *Is he unbeatable? Is he the meanest fighter of all-time? Would he destroy any heavyweight who ever lived?*

In the years that followed, though, history wasn't kind to Foreman because of the shadowy way in which his first career ended. He looked limited, almost robotic, when playing the dope in Ali's rope-a-dope. He pounded five pugs in a demeaning TV fiasco one Saturday afternoon. Then came an upset loss to Jimmy Young and the bizarre happenings in the dressing room afterward. When Foreman retired to a life of preaching, he didn't even go near an arena for years. In fact, he stopped hitting the heavybag in the garage because he said the noise disturbed the neighbors.

Not the stuff of which legends are made.

But what is the stuff of legends is doing the impossible. A 32-year-old Ali regains the title from the invincible Foreman. A Sugar Ray Leonard who had been sidelined for most of five years comes back to beat the world's greatest fighter, Marvin Hagler. And now, a 42-year-old Foreman gives a 28-year-old heavyweight champion the most nerve-wracking night of his life.

Incredibly, Foreman has improved his defense, stamina, and confidence 17 years after his prime. Imagine the 42-year-old Foreman with the younger version's speed. Imagine the 25-year-old Foreman with the older version's stamina. Imagine that it's 1991 and Foreman is making us talk this way.

3) Boxing needed a night like this: In recent years, the Sweet Science has staged few can't-miss events that didn't miss. Tyson-Spinks lasted 91 seconds. Leonard-Duran III made the crowd say "No mas." Tyson-Ruddock and Chavez-Taylor, both gorgeous fights, ended in ugly controversies. And Foreman-Holyfield had the potential to be the most image-bruising of the bunch.

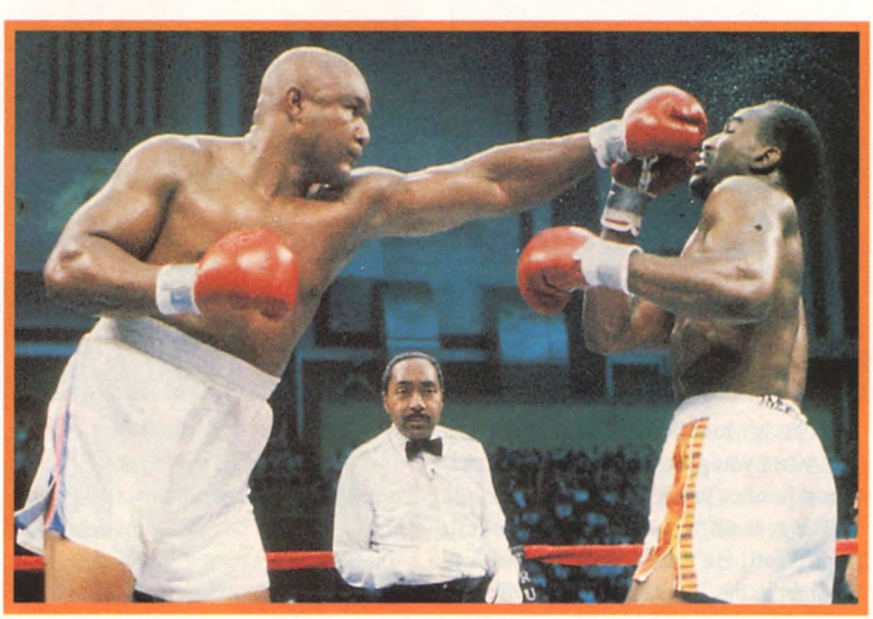
The projected scenarios had Holyfield winning a slaughter and the public crying, "Farce!" Or Foreman winning by knockout and the public crying, "Fix!" Or Foreman getting seriously hurt in a grueling fight and the public simply crying. But, surprisingly, boxing's image got a rare polishing, and nobody was heard muttering that he should have saved his money for the next pay-per-view telecast of the Tractor Pull Nationals. For that, thank Foreman.

"All the boxing fans and sports fans out there owe you a debt of gratitude," Dan Duva, the bout's co-promoter, told the beaten challenger.

"This man has set an example for boxing that few people will ever forget," added Duva's partner in the promotion, Bob Arum.

His popularity at an all-time high, Foreman is now in a perfect position to become one of the hottest commercial properties in sports, fulfill the elder statesman role that had once been reserved for Ali, and accept HBO's reported seven-figure offer to join Jim Lampley and Larry Merchant as a broadcaster on the pay network's fightcasts.

But looming are the disturbing temptations of a rematch with Holyfield and a showdown with Tyson. Never mind that



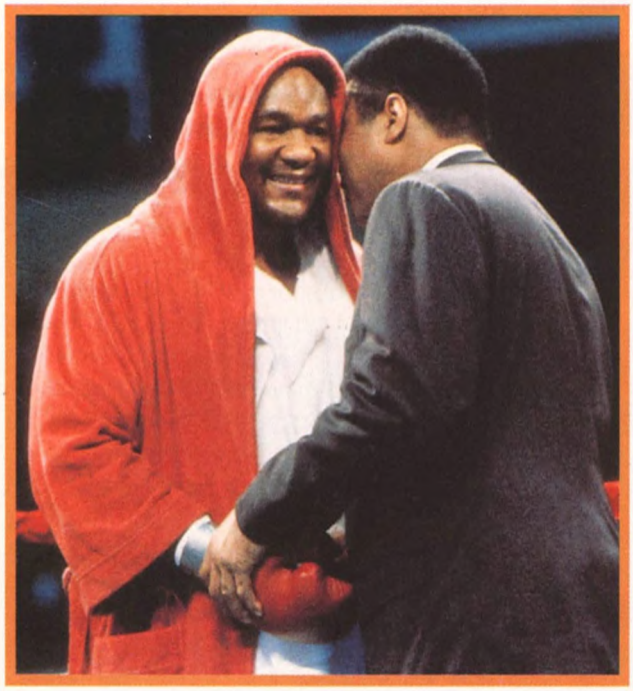
Holyfield opted to take a defensive approach in the championship rounds, keeping a safe distance away from Foreman, who had hurt Holyfield with a left-right combination in the 10th round.

With a showdown with ex-champ Mike Tyson continuing to be pushed back, Holyfield's unanimous decision victory over Foreman reaffirmed his status atop the heavyweight division, with seemingly no one waiting in the wings good enough to beat him.

Tyson is a faster and bigger puncher than Holyfield, or that it is likely the Holyfield war, particularly rounds like the frenetic seventh, took a tremendous toll on Foreman's tired body. Before Big George had even had a good night's sleep, some members of his camp were already planning his next tuneup.

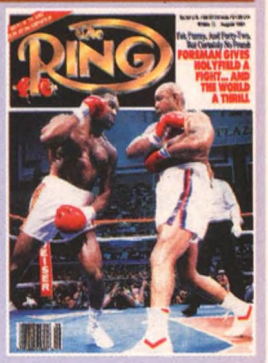
What they should have been planning was a grand retirement party, one that would assure us all that one of boxing's most dramatic and heart-tugging memories in a long time won't be trampled on: the image of George Foreman, still standing, still punching, and still landing, somewhere in the midst of a white fog, while a crowd that long ago despised him gleefully chants his name.

Was that a smoke bomb? Big George just thought he was standing on Cloud Nine. ■



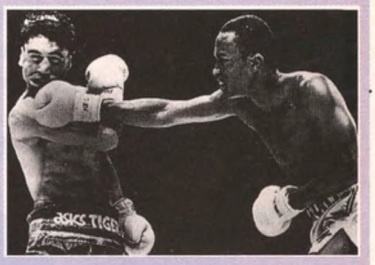
Muhammad Ali wished his old rival Foreman luck against the much younger, quicker Holyfield. With his popularity at an all-time high, fulfilling an elder statesman role once reserved for Ali, Foreman placed himself in a position to become one of the hottest commercial properties in sports.

THE RING, August 1991



The Cover: The Evander Holyfield-George Foreman fight provided more thrills than anyone could have anticipated. The lovable Foreman went the distance against "The Real Deal," and although he lost, "Big George" came away more respected than he was before the fight.

Here Comes Kelley: Before Kevin Kelley would go on to boxing stardom as the WBC featherweight champion, he was a budding pro with a 19-0 record and 13 knockouts. Featured as a "New Face," Kelley spoke about how he wanted to change the landscape of boxing and how sports fans view boxers.



Sweating It Out: THE RING took a behind-the-scenes look at the dangers boxers face in sucking weight prior to a bout. Weakened by losing nine pounds the day before the weigh-in of a title defense against Steve McCrory, IBF bantamweight champion Jeff Fenech ate his share of leather before winning by kayo in the 14th round.

Battle Of The Legends: Rocky Marciano would have handled Jack Dempsey the same way he did Jersey Joe Walcott if "The Manassa Mauler" and "The Brockton Blockbuster" had met in their primes, said two of three veteran boxing observers. Don Dunphy, the voice of boxing, opined, "If Rocky could survive Dempsey's opening attack, he would win by a knockout in the third or fourth round."

Fighter Of The Month: Simon Brown unified the IBF and WBC welterweight titles by surviving one of the most difficult fights of his career, stopping close friend Maurice Blocker in the 10th round. Seconds after referee Mills Lane called a halt to the bout, Brown hugged Blocker and wouldn't let go.

COME OUT WRITING

We welcome your letters, which may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

HOPKINS: TRUE PEOPLE'S CHAMPION

It's time that people who love boxing wake up and recognize a true one-of-a-kind champion among us today: IBF middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins. "The Executioner" is a throwback to the great champions of the past. It's obvious Bernard fights not just for the money, but for the love of boxing.

Anyone who saw Hopkins twice scientifically breakdown a tough, strong Antwun Echols knows what a special fighter he is. Regardless of what happens in the middleweight tournament between Felix Trinidad-William Joppy and Keith Holmes-Hopkins, Hopkins has already proven he is the middleweight champion of the world—period!

In addition to his fighting ability, Bernard is a standup person who is willing to speak up on issues such as insurance for fighters who risk their lives every time they walk into the ring. On top of that, Bernard is a well-spoken individual who has overcome a lot in his life, and it's encouraging to see Bernard set an example for other people who want to change their lives in a positive manner the way he did.

I hope Hopkins gets his superfight against Trinidad, because I think he deserves the chance to show the people what he can do.

BRIAN McCARRAHER
Citrus Heights, CA

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Bernard Hopkins is underappreciated as a champion, writes reader Brian McCarraher. Hopkins showed how special he is by crushing tough challenger Antwun Echols via 10th-round stoppage in their second meeting, in December 2000.

YOUTH MOVEMENT NEEDED

It is obvious that boxing needs a solid young fan base to survive, as every sport does. It has come to my attention, however, that the number of people between the ages of 16 and 26 interested in boxing is woefully low. Being in my late-teens, I feel as if I am the only fight fan around who is not on the wrong side of 50.

Recently, a number of new shows have been set up with the intention of bringing a whole new band of youthful fans into this unique sport. Maybe shows such as *ThunderBox* and *KO Nation* seem like a good idea on paper, but in practice, they give the impression that our proud sport is desperate to find a new identity. In my opinion, the makers of these new series are doing their very best to turn boxing into the World Wrestling Federation. Okay, so the WWF is attracting tons of fans between the ages of 16 and 26, but professional wrestling is not a sport. The object of wrestling is to provide excitement, and to do this, they employ outrageous storylines, along with a huge number of scantily clad women.

I believe that some of the people responsible for TV boxing said, "Let's throw loads of women in bikinis onto our boxing shows and have strobe lights and fireworks,"

to get the pulse of younger viewers going. Don't get me wrong, I love looking at these women as much as the next guy, but every time I see females accompanying a focused, snarling fighter on his way to the ring, it makes me cringe. It looks very cheap and tacky.

RONAN KEENAN
Dublin, Ireland

DESERVING TITO

My compliments to THE RING for doing the right thing: giving the 2000 Fighter of the Year award to Felix "Tito" Trinidad. Kudos also for devoting a large portion of the May 2001 issue to this great boxing superstar. What a terrific thing for a pure boxing fan to be living at a time when great boxing is still a part of the sport! We often hear the bad things about boxing, but the year 2000 proved that boxing still has a lot of wonderful things in store. Much of this is due to two phenomenal fighters: Trinidad and Shane Mosley.

There is no question that these are by far the best fighters in the world today, and that in all likelihood they will both be honored by the Hall of Fame someday as two of the all-time great champions. Unlike Roy Jones, Tito and Sugar Shane commit and fight the best fighters available.

VAL RAMOS JR.
Hamden, CT

PLAYING IT TOO SAFE

After watching the Erik Morales-Guty Espadas fight on February 17, I was reminded of a problem that has been plaguing boxing for some time: fighters trying to win decisions instead of fights. Of course, this is nothing new, but I believe the phenomenon has become more prevalent in the last decade or so, leading to many disappointing fights and controversial decisions. Perhaps the trend began with Sugar Ray Leonard-Marvin Hagler, in which Leonard more or less danced his way to a decision victory, knowing that flashy combinations over seven or eight rounds would be enough to get the nod. He did the math.

There have been many other fights in the same vein in which one fighter gets an aerobic workout and a million dollars, and the fans get nothing but frustration. Think of Lennox Lewis ho-humming his way through the first Evander Holyfield fight, or Pernell Whitaker throwing away the last round against Oscar De La Hoya, or De La Hoya throwing away the last three rounds against Felix Trinidad. They all believed that they'd already won and that the scorecards were more important than conclusively beating their opponents.

Felix Trinidad's amazing 2000 campaign included the classic against Fernando Vargas that helped earn "Tito" THE RING's Fighter of the Year award. It is an honor reader Val Ramos Jr. feels Trinidad richly deserved.

PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

A lot of viewers thought that Erik Morales didn't deserve the decision against defending WBC featherweight champion Guty Espadas, but reader Chris Speck believes part of the problem is fighters paying too much attention to the scorecards and not enough to winning emphatically.

This is a ripoff boxing can't afford. If fans lose interest, then the demand for competitive fights will shrink, and we will return to how it was in the mid-1990s, when promoters had too much power and the best fights were not being made. For the money they're getting, fighters should fight to win, rather than fighting not to lose.

CHRIS SPECK
Durham, NC

BE FAIR TO FRANCISCO

I'm disturbed by the lack of respect the American boxing press has given WBC 154-pound champion Francisco Castillejo. In William Dettloff's article "Who Will Stay And Who Will Go?" in the May 2001 issue, Castillejo is described as "not an awful fighter" and someone who would "last at least a day or two as one of Felix Trinidad's sparring partners." Huh? What? Do you guys actually examine the records of the people you dismiss before you write this stuff?

Castillejo is 51-4 (34) and has been a world champion for more than two years. With the exception of a points loss early in his career, all of his defeats came against credible opposition, namely Laurent Boudouani (twice) and Julio Cesar Vasquez. Since winning the title on January 29, 1999, he has fought seven times, including five title defenses. This, in an age when a champion is considered "active" if he fights more than twice a year.

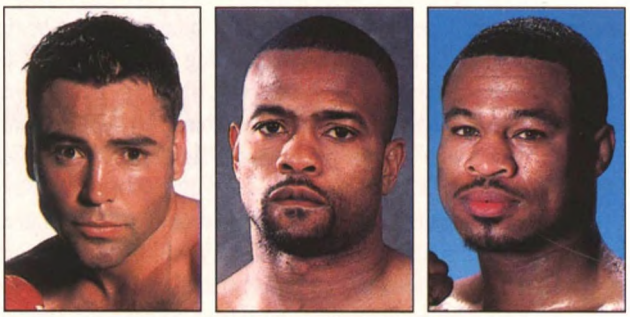
Look, guys, Castillejo is not a great fighter and he is not going to survive a matchup with Oscar De La Hoya or Fernando Vargas, but he *is* a credible, workmanlike champion who has made the most of an improbable title reign. For that alone, he has my respect.

MILES WATSON
York, PA ■

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

HBO'S SUMMER OF GLOVE



Pound-for-pounders De La Hoya, Jones, and Mosley are all on HBO this summer

While ESPN2 and Showtime are turning up the heat with a pair of new boxing series this summer, HBO isn't just lounging by the pool, letting the competition pass them by. Between early-June and early-August, the cable giant—along with pay-per-view arm TVKO—has on its tentative schedule three of the top six fighters in THE RING's pound-for-pound ratings, the HBO debuts of two bantamweight champions who've generally fought for rival Showtime, and a fight ESPN2's Max Kellerman recently cited as one of the top five matches that can possibly be made.

It all starts on June 9 with a TVKO show featuring **Oscar De La Hoya** vs. **Francisco Castillejo** for the latter's WBC 154-pound title. The matchup may not make your heart race, but it will be interesting to see how "The Golden Boy" handles the move up in weight against a naturally bigger man. According to HBO Sports Vice President of Programming **Kery Davis**, one possibility for the chief supporting bout is **Hector Camacho Jr.** in the first real test of his career, against cagey veteran **Jesse James Leija**.

Two weeks later, on June 23, a *Boxing After Dark* show is planned, and talks were underway as of press time to make IBF bantamweight champ **Tim Austin**, who has never competed on HBO, the headliner. Two weeks after that, on July 7, HBO heads to Coney Island in New York for a potentially excellent bout between IBF cruiserweight champion **Vassiliy Jirov** and **James Toney**. This is a fight Kellerman has been championing for nearly two years as the ultimate boxer vs. puncher battle, and it will be supported either by Camacho-Leija (Davis wasn't sure as of early-April which date it would land on) or a fight featuring top heavyweight **Wladimir Klitschko**.

July 21 marks the return of pound-for-pound king **Sugar Shane Mosley**, against an opponent to be determined. HBO's ideal choice to challenge Mosley is **Vernon Forrest**, though there may be a logistical problem there.

"Forrest is fighting **Raul Frank** on May 12," Davis said, "so everything depends on what happens in that fight. If Forrest wins, and doesn't take much punishment, he might be ready to go again. He'll have more than two months to get ready."

One week later, on July 28, one of Sugar Shane's chief competitors for pound-for-pound supremacy, light heavyweight champ **Roy Jones**, will try to win over some of his detractors with a TVKO defense against the exciting and undefeated **Julio Gonzalez**. Gonzalez appears tailor-made for Jones to look good against, but at the same time, presents more of a threat than recent victims such as **Derrick Harmon** and **Richard Hall**. Also on that pay-per-view show are two featherweight title fights: an intriguing battle between **Derrick Gainer** and **Juan Manuel Marquez**, and **Erik Morales'** mandatory defense against Korean **In Jin Chi**.

Moving into August, it'll be Showtime regular **Paulie Ayala** jumping over to HBO for a shot at WBA 122-pound champion **Bones Adams**, a pick-'em fight if ever there was one. That bout is planned for August 4 on *Boxing After Dark*, from the Mandalay Bay casino in Las Vegas.

If you watch HBO for more than just boxing, you may be familiar with their offbeat new comedy series *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. Meeting the demands of that show's title might not be easy to do for boxing fans, as we brace for a busy summer spent soaking up UV rays during the day, and TV rays at night.

LISTEN UP

It looks like the date for that **John Ruiz-Evander Holyfield** rubber match in China is going to be Sunday, August 5 ... September 15, meanwhile, is the target date for the finals of HBO's middleweight unification tournament ... Not many guys at super middleweight are threats to outpoint IBF champion **Sven Ottke** in Germany, so it seems the best candidates to take the title from him are kayo artists. Enter **James "The Harlem Hammer" Butler**. The hard-hooking Butler is Ottke's mandatory challenger, and he is scheduled to fight for the title in September. ■

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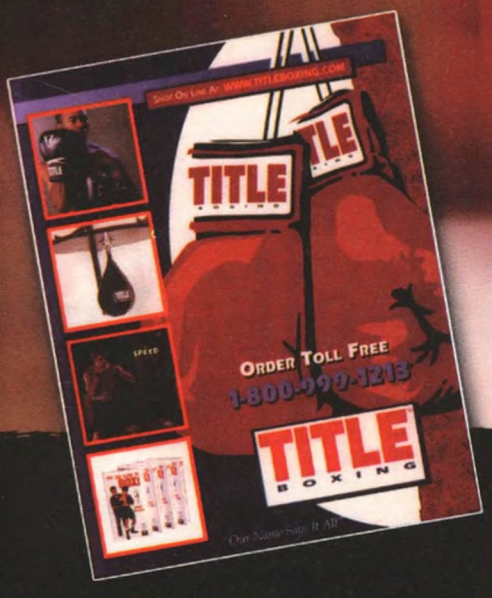
NO HASSLES.



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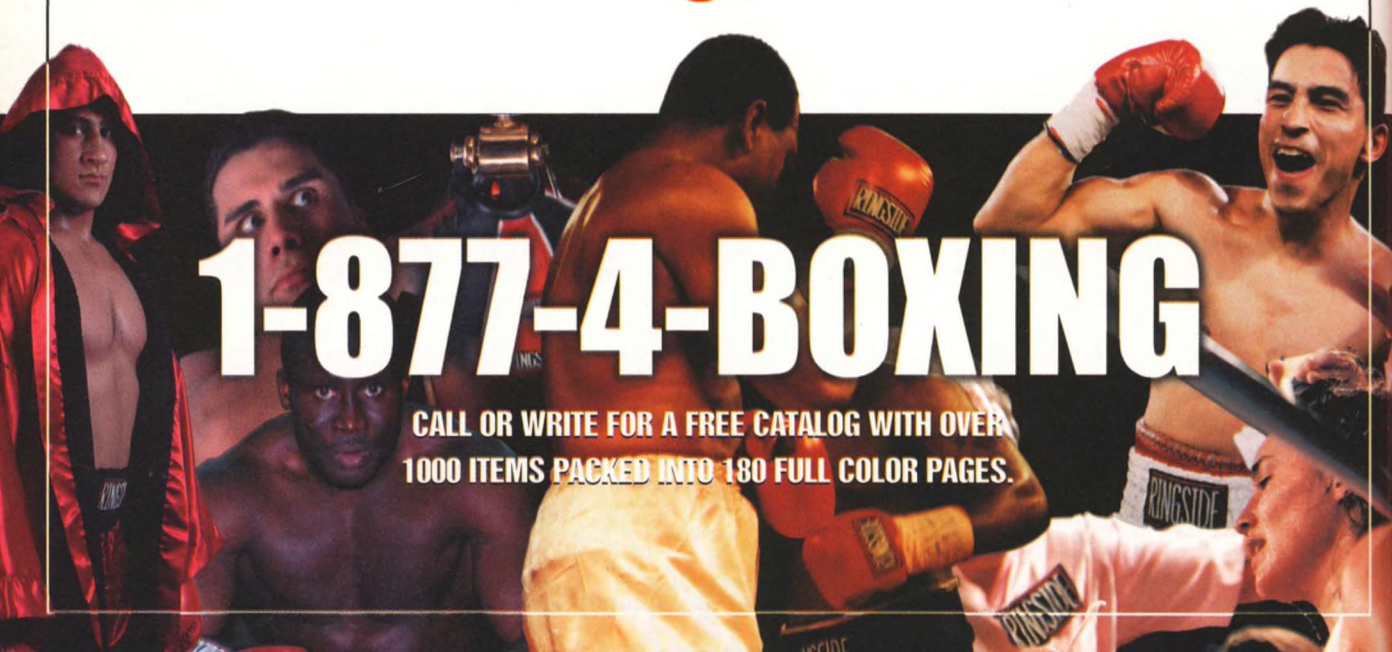

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